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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS ON THE
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OR, THE WATERWAYS, LAGOONS, AND DECOYS
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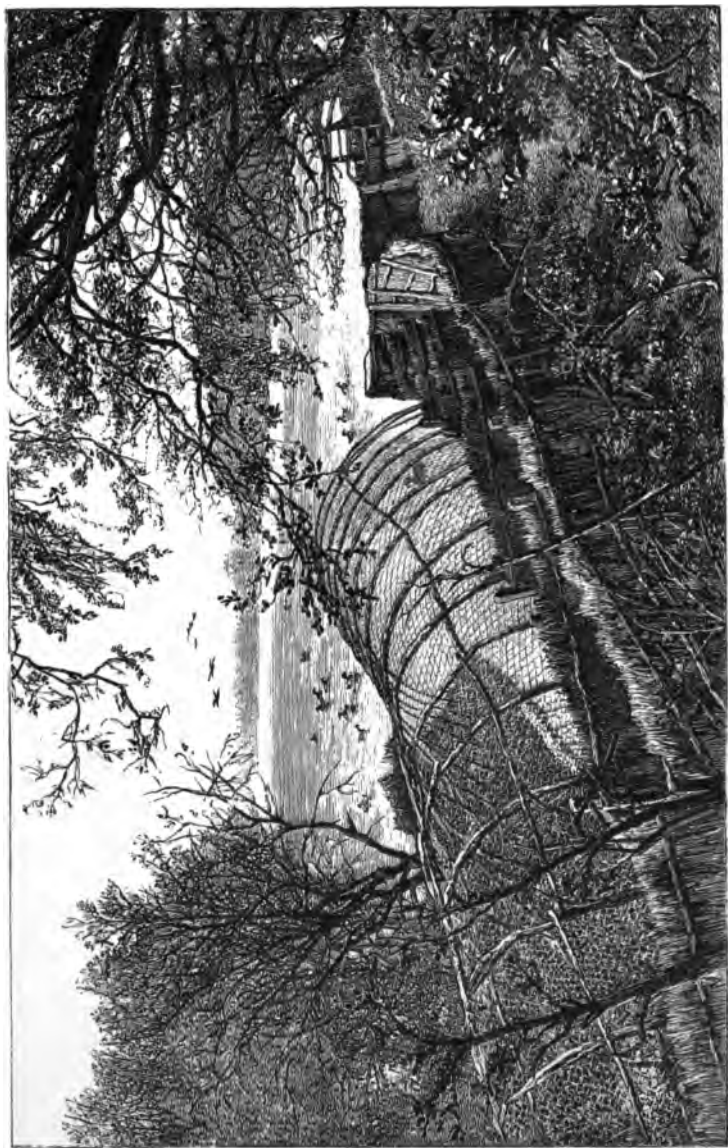
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NORFOLK BROADS AND RIVERS







DECOY-PIPE, LOOKING TOWARDS THE ENTRANCE.—*Frontispiece.*

NORFOLK BROADS AND RIVERS

OR

THE WATER-WAYS, LAGOONS, AND
DECOYS OF EAST ANGLIA

BY

G. CHRISTOPHER DAVIES

AUTHOR OF 'THE SWAN AND HER CREW'

NEW EDITION

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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P R E F A C E.

It is rather amusing to note the number of persons who, after a visit to the Broad District, send enthusiastic descriptions of their excursions to the 'Field,' 'Hunt's Yachting Magazine,' and other periodicals. The truth is that, to persons of a certain bent of mind, there is an engrossing charm in the lakes and rivers of East Anglia. No one knows better than the Author how strong this feeling is, and no one perhaps has been guilty of writing so much on the subject. This book, however, is positively his last appearance in the field of descriptive writing anent the Broads.

There is no better "playground" in England, and certainly none easier of access or more cheaply to be enjoyed, than the Broad District. The professional avocations of the Author do not allow him time for

any extended holidays ; but with the aid of a small yacht, short intervals of rest can be employed in the most agreeable manner, and with the minimum of expenditure.

Some of the chapters in the book originally appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine'; while part of the chapter on Wherries, "A Crusade against Poaching," and "Pike-fishing in Jordan," appeared in the 'Field'; "Rockland Broad" in the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' "Fritton Decoy" in the 'Art Journal,' and "On the Upper Yare" in the 'East Anglian Handbook.'

The Author is indebted to the proprietors of the several periodicals named, for their courtesy in allowing him to republish such articles.

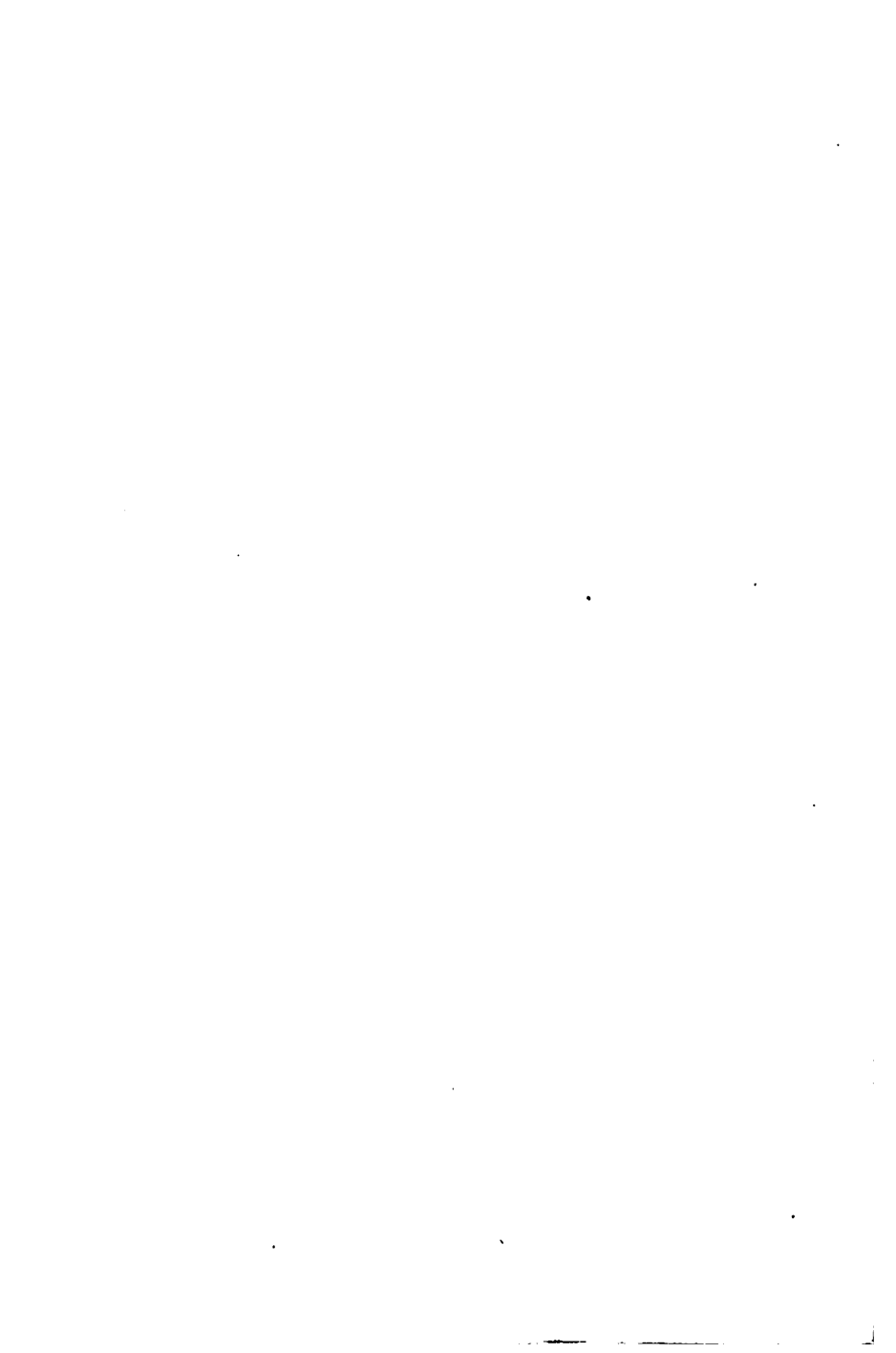
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THE
NORFOLK BROADS AND RIVERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROAD DISTRICT.

IN the autumn and winter, the wild-fowl flying southward and westward in search of less rigorous climes are arrested by the projection of the Norfolk coast, and see beneath them, but a few miles inland, the gleaming surface of lagoon and river, and vast expanses of reed-beds. If they flew all England over, they could find no spot so fit for them as this district of marsh and shallow, lake and reed ; so down they drop, and stay until the spring lures them back to their more northern breeding-places. All do not return : the gun, the decoy, and the snare thin their ranks ; but many also, which have found the loneliest spots in this lonely region, are so fascinated that they stay to breed, and then the collector too often finds out their retreat.

The smaller migrants, too, which visit us in the spring for the purpose of breeding, are arrested by this obtrusive Norfolk; so that it is a county favoured beyond others in an ornithological sense. It has been said that "all England can be carved out of Norfolk," meaning that there is every variety of land and scenery (save mountains) within its borders. A triangular gap in it will represent the flat and watery Broad district, on its eastern side; while the rest consists of hills, woods, enclosures, wide open commons and heaths, and rich corn and pasture lands. Our present concern is with the Broad district.

The term Broad is peculiar to Norfolk. Its etymology is obvious—namely, a broadening out of the rivers into lakes, the Broads being intimately connected with the rivers, which in some cases flow through them, and in others are only divided from them by a reed-bed. Whittlesea Mere and other parts of the Fen district were the counterparts of the Broads in many respects; but the character of the Fens has so much changed since their drainage, that it is to Norfolk only that one can now look for the wildness and solitude of marsh and mere so dear to the naturalist and sportsman.

If you take the map and draw a line from Pakefield, on the Suffolk coast, 27 miles northwards to Happisburgh, and then across to Norwich, 18 miles inland, then with a curve south-east back to Pakefield, you will have a triangle which comprehends the chief of the Broads and rivers—a district for the most part as flat as a billiard-

table, where water and land strive for the mastery, and come to a delightful compromise. This tract of country is intersected by three principal rivers, and dotted with a score of lakes. First, below Norwich (a city of nightingales, which are very numerous in its suburbs), the smaller river Yare flows into the larger river Wensum, and then the united stream, under the name of the Yare, flows a sinuous course of 35 miles, until it debouches into the sea at Yarmouth.

For all this distance the river is broad and deep, and in the lower half the tide ebbs and flows, "backing" up the water even as far as Norwich. The natural fall of the river is only four inches in the mile; the rise and fall of the tide is very little. There are no locks, and only one bridge, which is a "swing" one, so that the Yare is the perfection of a navigable river. For five miles below Norwich the banks are hilly and wooded, but afterwards the water is bordered by tall reeds, and beyond the reeds are miles of marsh.

The only Broads on the upper part of the Yare are Surlingham and Rockland, both of limited extent; or rather, the open water has been so reduced by the rapid growth of the reeds and aquatic vegetation, that these appear to be small. Just above Yarmouth is the magnificent tidal lake called Breydon. Roughly speaking, it is five miles long by two-thirds of a mile wide; and at high water, when the muds are covered, it forms a noble expanse of water—the deeper channel of the river through it being marked by

painted posts to guide the vessels sailing across. At low water, the muds or flats on either side are dry, and attract myriads of wild-fowl, which find their food on the soft ooze, and in winter afford sport and sustenance to the gunner in his flat-bottomed punt.

The river Waveney also enters in at the top of Breydon, and is navigable for seven-and-twenty miles southward and westward through Beccles to Bungay in a sinuous course. The peculiarities of the Waveney are its depth—which is 20 feet close to the banks in places—and the surpassing clearness of its water. While sailing up it you may see, yards beneath you, the tops of waving weeds and shoals of frightened fish; and the blue of its surface and the white of the waves which rise to the bows and eddy astern, are only paralleled by the blue and white in the sky above. A canal or cut of three miles in length connects the Yare at Reedham with the Waveney at Haddiscoe. A mile and a half from the latter place is a beautiful sheet of water, two miles long, named Fritton Broad, which is interesting, inasmuch as there are two decoys upon it still worked by the proprietors. A wide cut called Oulton Dyke connects the mid-length of the Waveney with Oulton Broad, 100 acres in extent, and the most civilised of all the Broad, inasmuch as it has a village on its banks and always a fleet of yachts on its surface. At the lower end of the Broad is a lock which gives access to a tidal lake called Lake Lothing, two miles long; then comes Lowestoft harbour and the sea.

Returning to the lower end of Breydon Water, we find the mouth of the Bure, which flows from the north-west, and is navigable up to Aylsham, a distance of forty miles by river. It is up this fine river and its tributaries that the wildest and most interesting of the Broads lie. First, as we go up, is a sheet of water with many arms, known as Ormesby, Filby, and Rollesby Broads, containing together about 800 acres. These are not accessible from the main river, except by small boats, and along a dyke bearing the euphonious name of Muck Fleet. "Fleet" is a Norfolk word for shallow,—a fleet place is where there is but little water. A few miles higher up we come to the Thurne, a broad river, which communicates with Hickling Broad, Whiteslea, Horsey Mere, Heigham Sounds, and Martham Broad. Of these Hickling is the largest, covering some 400 acres. All the Broads are very shallow, but this is the shallowest, its depth not exceeding 4 feet 6 inches, except in the "channel."

Its water is beautifully clear, and its bottom is of hard yellow gravel, over which shoals of fish scud away as one's boat approaches. All the other Broads have bottoms of black mud of an unknown depth, and so soft that a yacht's anchor will not hold in it, so that large blocks of iron ballast are used instead, which will not drag through the "putty," as the mud is locally called. Returning to the Bure, we come to the mouth of the river Ant, which leads to Barton Broad, 200 acres in extent, and to Stalham Broad. Again, returning to the course of the Bure, we

come to a group of Broad—Walsham, Ranworth, Decoy Broad, Hoveton (Great and Little) Broad, Salhouse, and lastly, Wroxham—a large and very beautiful Broad, where regattas are frequently held. Above Wroxham is Belaugh Broad. To sum up, there are here 200 miles of navigable rivers, and 5000 acres of water in the Broad.

Many of the marshes around the group of Broad up the “north river,” as the Bure is usually called, are left in their pristine wildness; but in the lower waters there is a very complete system of drainage. The river surface, as a rule, is much higher than the adjacent marshes, which, as the moisture was pumped out of their peaty and spongy soil, shrank and sank just as a sponge does in drying, until they left the river-level several feet above them. A low embankment on either side of the river confines its waters, and at the outlets of the drains are pumps which lift the water out of them into the river. These pumps were all formerly, and many still are, worked by means of small windmills; and it is a curious sight, on looking over the wide marshes, to see the scores of windmills all twirling merrily round. Steam is now used at the outlets of the more important drains, and does the work more effectually. Even now the water often gains the mastery.

It might be imagined that the scenery of such a flat and marshy country must be most uninteresting. Yet it is not so, except, perhaps, near the sea, where the vegetation is not so luxuriant as it is in the upper reaches.

On either side of the river, and around the Broad, is a

dense wall of emerald-green reeds, from seven to ten feet in height. Then come the yellow iris flowers, tall and bending rushes and bulrushes, the sweet-sedge, with its curious catkins; tangled feathery grasses, in such variety that, as you stand up to your waist in them, you may pluck a dozen kinds without moving; blue clusters of forget-me-nots, foxgloves, spikes of purple loose-strife, and broad tufts of valerian; bushes of woody nightshade; and, sweeter than all, masses upon masses, all the way along, of the cream-white and strong-scented meadow-sweet,—these are what make the immediate banks changing panoramas of kaleidoscopic beauty. Then on the water, beneath the reeds and across shallow bays, and in the little “pulks” or miniature Broads, which everywhere open off the river, are lilies, yellow and white, in dazzling abundance. Here and there are tropical tangles of wood; a picturesque house in a cluster of trees, or a reed-stack floating on the river with a supporting wherry hidden somewhere beneath it.

The far-reaching marsh has a beauty of its own, that of changing colour as the wind bows the many-tinted grasses and flowers, and the wind-waves and cloud-shadows sweep along; while everywhere are the snowy sails of yachts and the red-brown canvas of the wherries. The atmospheric effects, too, are unusually beautiful, and sunrises and sunsets glow with a warmth of colour that gives the placid lagoons an almost unearthly loveliness; while, when the sun is set, the mists often show lakes and ships and islands

that vanish with the dawn. Colour is seen far away ; a group of red and white cattle, or the scarlet berries of the guelder rose entwined around some fallen willow, with a gleam of sunshine upon them, will lighten up miles of marsh. Then the flight of hawk and heron, snipe and wild-duck, the splash of fish, and the scattering rush of the small fry as a pike makes his raid upon them, are incidents of every hour.

The marshes often present a curious sight. If the spectator is on the same level, scarcely any water may be visible, and the expanse of marsh may seem continuous ; yet here and there and everywhere are the sails of yachts and wherries gliding through it, their hulls invisible.

The general appearance of the country reminds us strongly of a descriptive passage in Henry Havard's 'Picturesque Holland.' He says :—

“We sailed in the direction of the Sneekermeer, and after following for fully half an hour the various bends of a broad canal, we suddenly came into the middle of this great lake—an immense extent of water, the limits of which were scarcely visible.

“That which gives to the inland seas of Friesland an appearance almost unique, is the uniform flatness of the shores, also the nature of the soil which constitutes the bottom. This in fact, formed by inexhaustible peat-bogs, gives to the water a dark-violet colour, just like that of copying ink, the smallest ray of sun on the ripples producing a golden tint positively magical. Near land this

curious shade becomes more intense; in contrast with the tender green of the reed-beds, it becomes almost black.

“As soon, however, as you leave the shore, the land, being so low, becomes almost imperceptible. One would imagine it a green cloak eternally floating on the face of the deep dark waters, without fixity or solidity. The clumps of trees perceptible in the distance, the houses which lose themselves in the grey mist, the church steeples with their varnished tiles shining in the morning fog, seem to rise up on the water and float on its surface. Even those extensive plains covered with reeds, always moving and bending to the softest breeze, only add to the fantastic appearance of the watery shores. Pliny’s astonishment is easily understood when seeing for the first time the curious landscapes, and his comparing their inhabitants to eternal navigators—*navigantibus similes*.”

The waters of these English meres, however, have not the peaty colour of the Friesland meres. The water is clear and pure, and where the bottom is gravelly, as it is all over Hickling and the Sounds and Horsey Mere, it is plainly visible.

One constantly sees, generally moored in some creek, a large rough boat with a hut built upon it. These are the abodes of men who live by catching eels and other fish, and spend all the year round on the water. The lives of these men are much the same as those of the “Broad Men” described by the Rev. Richard Lubbock.

“When I first visited the Broads, I found here and there an occupant ‘squatted down,’ as the Americans would call it, on the verge of a pool, who relied almost entirely on shooting and fishing for the support of his family, and lived in a truly primitive manner. I particularly remember one hero of this description. ‘Our Broad,’ as he always called the extensive pool by which his cottage stood, was his microcosm, his world—the islands in it were his gardens of the Hesperides, its opposite extremity his Ultima Thule. Wherever his thoughts wandered, they could not get beyond the circle of his beloved lake; indeed I never knew them aberrant but once, when he informed me, with a doubting air, that he had sent his wife and his two eldest children to a fair, at a country village two miles off, that their ideas might expand by travel; as he sagely observed, they had never been away from ‘Our Broad.’ I went into his house at the dinner-hour, and found the whole party going to fall to, most thankfully, upon a roasted herring-gull—killed, of course, on ‘Our Broad.’ His life presented no vicissitudes but an alteration of marsh employment. In winter, after his day’s reed-cutting, he might be found posted at nightfall waiting for the flight of fowl, or paddling after them on the open water. With the first warm days of February he launched his fleet of trimmers; pike finding a ready sale at his own door to those who bought them to sell again in the Norwich market. As soon as the pike had spawned and were out of season, the eels began

to occupy his attention, and lapwings' eggs to be diligently sought for.

"In the end of April the island in his watery domain was frequently visited, for the sake of shooting the ruffs which resorted thither on their first arrival. As the days grew longer and hotter, he might be found searching in some smaller pools near his house for the shoals of tench as they commenced spawning. Yet a little longer he began marsh-mowing—his gun always laid ready upon his coat, in case flappers should be met with. By the middle of August teal came to a wet corner near his cottage, snipes began to arrive, and he was often called up to exercise his vocal powers on the curlews that passed to and fro. By the end of September good snipe-shooting was generally to be met with in his neighbourhood; and his accurate knowledge of the marshes, his unassuming good-humour, and zeal in providing sport for those who employed him, made him very much sought after as a sporting guide by snipe-shots and fishermen; and his knowledge of the habits of different birds enabled him to give useful information to those who collected them."

The older men have many yarns to tell of the gigantic pike and eels, the great catches of their younger days, with sometimes a spice of adventure, as the following tale will show. The men from the Yare and the Waveney, having well harried their own waters, used to go up the Bure, and their depredations with nets and set-lines stirred up the wrath of the men of the Bure. There

was then no remedy save that of force, so the natives banded themselves together to expel the intruders. Our informant and his mate were engaged one dark night near Ranworth setting eel-lines, when they heard the sound of muffled oars up the stream. They listened and watched, and at last became aware that at least half-a-dozen boats were creeping down in search of them. They took to their oars, and then the chase developed itself into a hot and eager one—both parties pulling their lustiest, the one to inflict and the other to escape rough punishment. The pursued were nearly caught, when they opened up a reach, down which there blew a fair strong wind, and hoisting their lug-sail they slipped away, and gained such a lead that the pursuers gave up the chase.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRD-LIFE OF THE BROADS.

WHETHER one is observant or not, one cannot help "brushing elbows" with the bird-life of the Broad. It is not the purpose of this chapter to describe the many rare species which visit or nest in the district, but rather to call attention to the everyday life therein. Embark with us, then, on board one of the small but comfortable river yachts, and see what a single summer's day will show you. As we sail up the "north river" we see constantly the coots and water-hens as they swim in and out of the "rond," as the reed-covered water-washed bank is called. Every now and then a wild duck or widgeon, or a brood of flappers, is disturbed by our passage; and as we sweep round corners, herons rise on lazy wing, or, if out of gunshot, look suspiciously at us. High in air the marsh-harrier, the "Norfolk hawk," scans the marshes with hungry eye; then we turn suddenly, as if trying to charge an oak coppice, but a narrow "gateway" reveals itself, and we glide through it on to Wroxham Broad, which is skirted

by the river, the only division being a narrow "rond." On the other side beyond the reeds the land rises in wooded undulations, with park-like spaces between. All around the Broad is a dense and sheer wall of bright green reeds eight feet high, with a yellow water-mark on their lower stems. In and out of this the coots, water-hens, grebes, and wild-ducks are continually splashing and swimming. While our man is making the yacht snug for the night, we go in the jolly-boat and push her anywhere into the reeds and wait. The black-headed buntings, the reed-wrens, and the bearded tits gather close around us, and chatter and scold us vigorously; for very little search would reveal their nests. A kingfisher flashes along, and perches on a swaying reed within a few yards, and dives in again and again for the tiny roach and bream. Look, within ten yards are a pair of great-crested grebes and three young ones—tiny black balls which their parents are feeding. These dive rapidly, and rise with a fish two inches long in the beak; this is at once transferred to the young ones, which are also making ludicrous attempts to dive like their seniors. It is the last week in June, and the cuckoos have come to the Broad in numbers—why, we do not know; but they are flying across and perching on the trees, and calling loudly to each other, often with a note broken into three syllables—thus, cuck-cuck-oo. A fortnight later there will scarcely be one there, and the distinctive cry will have ceased. Over the marsh, on the opposite side of the river, two brown owls are hawking in

the bright sunshine, and, from the number of times they swoop, with great success. Overhead, no less than five snipes are sweeping and circling about, and as they descend for short distances with quivering tail and wing-tips, we hear that curious bleating or buzzing sound ("lamming," the Norfolk people call it, because of its similarity to the bleating of lambs), which is a characteristic of the snipe in the breeding season.

In the distance are many white birds flying about; and from them arises a noise like that of a rookery. We cross the Broad and the river, and enter a narrow water-lane between the reeds. This presently expands into a "pulk" studded with water-lilies, between which numbers of coots and water-hens are threading their way. The water is only a foot deep and very clear, so that we can see hundreds of big bream swimming lazily about, while smaller roach and rudd play on the surface. Here and there, as we slowly progress, we startle a basking pike. Now we are in a passage only just wide enough for the boat. Tall reeds rise on either hand, and nothing else is visible but the blue sky above. There goes a water-rail, and if we could push the boat in the reeds for a few feet, we should find its nest. Then we emerge into the open water of Hoveton Great Broad, and as we approach its lower end the air is filled with the black-headed gulls, which swoop close around and deafen us with their cries. Among this labyrinth of reeds and narrow water-lanes and tufts of long grasses, they breed in large numbers. On every little hillock of grass you see

their eggs ; and the water is dotted with the young ones, from the little yellow-and-brown ball of down just hatched, to those fully fledged and just able to fly. It is a sight worth seeing and to be remembered ; yet it cannot compare with Scoulton Mere, also in Norfolk, but out of the Broad district, where there is the largest colony known in England. As the summer wanes, the birds take their departure to the sea-coast. This end of the Broad is extremely shallow, but the mud is of great depth. It illustrates the process which is going on year by year in the Broad : the vegetation grows rankly and dies down, and so adds a layer both in thickness and extent to the shallow margin. When, by a repetition of this process, the mud reaches the surface, the roots of the reeds and the grasses make it firmer each year, until at last it can be drained and turned into dry land. Some of the smaller Broad s are growing up very fast.

Such is the usual scene of a summer's day. In the winter it is very wild and lonesome, but there are then great numbers of wild-fowl—common and rare.

Of the birds which frequent the Broad s, the heron is the most conspicuous, and it is to be seen everywhere. There are two or three large and many small heronries in Norfolk, and occasionally solitary pairs nest on the ground in some inaccessible marsh, instead of in trees as is their wont. One often sees groups of five or six herons together ; and once a friend of ours saw twenty in a group,—this was at Haddiscoe one spring, and the cause of such

an unusual assemblage was not apparent. The great-crested grebe may always be seen, and its soaking wet nest be found. If it has young ones, it dives with them under its wing when alarmed, and old and young are sometimes killed by the same shot. A bird-stuffer told us that a pair of grebes and three young ones, all killed at one shot, were lately brought to him. When one thinks of the fond maternal care so unavailing, one is tempted to be rather hard upon the insatiable collector and the unholy trade of egging and bird-destroying which ministers to his wants. We must not blame him too much, however, for the chief damage has been done by those who collect the eggs for eating. An almost incredible number of eggs is gathered for the market; and all eggs which in the least degree resemble plovers' eggs are sold as such. Everywhere, and particularly in Norfolk, there are scientific naturalists whose researches and discoveries are a sufficient justification of the collection of specimens; but there are large numbers of people who take up egg and bird collecting for the same motive which induces people to collect postage-stamps. They seek after acquisition only, and not the furtherance of science; and it is their kind of collecting that true ornithologists would be the first to condemn. The plover and the lapwing are everywhere common. The ruff (the male) and the reeve (the female), of the same species, used to be common, but are now rare. Their eggs used to be gathered to sell as plovers', and the birds were snared for the table. The

male in the breeding season has a splendid ruff, like Queen Elizabeth's collar, around his neck ; and this he is fond of displaying for the edification of the female, by marching to and fro on any bare hillock, called by fowlers his "hill." Lubbock says he has seen eighteen ruffs on one hill ; and when there are so many rivals fights occur, and the gay gallants are scattered. The fowler has laid horse-hair nooses around the base of the "hill," and so the beaten and escaping birds are caught by the leg or the neck. The bittern was formerly common enough, but its nest is now rarely found, and its singular "boom" but seldom heard. In the winter, however, numbers of them come to the Broad's with other wild-fowl, and many are shot. The reed-wren builds its deep purse-shaped nest amid the reeds ; and we have on several occasions seen jays hunting along the margins where portions of reed-beds have been cut, and sucking and destroying the eggs, the nests being so easily accessible. Reed-buntings are numerous everywhere ; and the graceful and singular bearded tit, which was once tolerably common, is now rare, although we have several times met with it. We have not space, however, to enumerate the various species of birds which either breed among or annually visit the Broad's. Enough has been said to indicate the ornithological richness of these tracts.

CHAPTER III.

THE FISH OF THE BROADS.

OF the fish with which these waters are teeming, so much can be said that it is difficult to select that which must go into the small compass at our command. The bream first deserves mention, because of its enormous numbers. It is everywhere, and attains to a large size: 4 and 5 lb. are now not uncommon weights, and one of 11 lb. was recently caught. The Norfolk bream-fisher is *sui generis*. You generally see them two in a boat, which is moored parallel with the stream, each man with an apron and a cloth. The bream is covered with such a thick slime, that were it not for these precautions the angler's clothes would be irretrievably ruined. Handfuls of brewers' grains are thrown in from time to time as ground-bait, and every swim produces a bite, so that at the end of a good day there may be from 5 to 8 stone weight of bream and roach in the boat.¹ The artisan classes of Norwich

¹ Two anglers once caught 17 stone weight of bream on Wroxham Broad in a day with fair angling, and this was not many years ago.

are great bream and roach fishers, and frequently have fishing contests, generally under the patronage of St Monday. On such noisy and festive occasions, however, the sport is generally comparatively poor. The bream is not a very toothsome fish to eat, but large quantities were formerly sold by the professional fishermen to the poorer Jews in our large towns for use on fast-days, of course at a very cheap rate; and to the fishermen on the coast for use as bait.

Of the large quantities caught by the angler, few are eaten. After the catch is weighed, it is cast away, and one often sees rotting heaps of fish on the banks. Tons have been used as manure; but these were the produce of an infamous system of poaching which prevailed before the passing of the Norfolk and Suffolk Fresh Water Fisheries Act in 1877. The poachers dragged the rivers with small-meshed nets, and even trawled up them just as is done at sea; and as many as eight tons of fish would be the produce of a day's or night's netting. When the price obtained for these would not pay for the carriage, they were simply thrown away. Now, however, there are regulations as to netting, which have put a stop to this, and the fisheries are fast becoming better than they have been for a long time. There is no restriction against rod-fishing at any time of the year in the free waters, which comprise the three rivers, and a decreasing number of the Broads.

The roach almost equals the bream in point of numbers,

and is caught of a uniform large size. The rudd, or roud as it is generally called in Norfolk, is very abundant, more particularly in the Broads. It is a brilliant-coloured active fish, and will rise at the fly, so that a day's roud-fishing is a most enjoyable experience. The carp is not common, but grows to a large size. Mr Lubbock mentions one which was caught in Belaugh Broad of the weight of 15½ lb. Perch are numerous and large. Four-pounders are frequently taken, and the Waveney produces some very large ones. A 7-lb. perch was taken some years ago out of the new cut from Reedham to Haddiscoe, and others from 5 to 6 lb. in weight have been taken in the Bure and on Ormesby Broad. The water-shrimp is the favourite bait for them.

The tench is common and large. It is not often caught by the angler, because the bream and roach will rush off with the bait while the tench is deliberating about it; but they are caught in great numbers by means of the bow-net. A bow-net set just below the town of Beccles had sixteen brace of fine tench in it when taken up. The attraction in this case was a bright-coloured bunch of flowers fastened inside. Great numbers, however, are taken in a very peculiar way. In the hot days of June, the tench, which are then spawning, visit the shallows and lie on the surface of the water in shoals. On the approach of the Broad-man in his boat they disperse, but only for a few yards, until they can hide themselves in the weeds in some shallow spot. The man notes where some of the fish go, and, paddling quietly up,

he bares his arm and feels for them. Unless the fish is touched on the tail, it will not move until it is lifted right into the boat; and in this manner five or six dozen fish, over 14 inches in length, may be taken in a day.

The eel and the pike are, however, the chief "paying" fish in these waters. The eel is the support of numbers of fishermen, who "bob" for it with bundles of worms threaded on worsted, in which the eel's teeth get entangled; spear it in the dykes and along the shallow margins; set eel-pots; and net it in a variety of ways. On the Bure, large nets are set across the river during the autumn nights, to catch the eels making their annual migration to the sea. Immense catches are made on dark and stormy nights, when the eels are most on the move. Some of the eels are sold in Norwich and Yarmouth, but the greater number go to Birmingham and the Black Country, where such rich food is apparently much appreciated. Long night lines, with hundreds of hooks upon them, baited with small fish, used also to be set; but the recent Act made this illegal, because pike and other fish were often caught on them. The poachers trawling up the Waveney have taken 90 stones of eels in a week, although eels are the most difficult fish of any to be caught with a drag-net. After the last summer floods the eels were greatly on the move; and the men who sat and "bobbed" just below Norwich would get 4 or 5 stone weight in a single night, which would sell for ten shillings a stone.

The pike is the monarch of the Norfolk waters, and

at one time was supremely abundant, but the natives harried him to their utmost. Liggers or trimmers, made of bundles of rushes, were set by the hundred. The smaller Broads were hired by fishermen who, to make a livelihood out of them, caught all they could. Yarrell, in his 'British Fishes,' gives an instance of four days' slaughter of the pike on Heigham Sounds and Horsey Mere—viz, 256 pike, weighing 1135 lb. Mr Lubbock instances ninety pike, many of them of large size, being taken on Ranworth Broad by two amateur fishermen in the same boat in one day. Lately, on Scoulton Mere, twenty-three were taken by trimmers in one day, five of them weighing over 20 lb. apiece. At Horning Ferry, on the public river, as many as twenty pike have been taken in a day by fair rod-fishing by one person, and weighing together 110 lb. The largest pike we have known to be recently taken in Norfolk were two taken in one day on private waters: one was 36 lb. and the other 30 lb. While some friends of ours were fishing at Burnt Fen Broad, close by Horning village, one of them hooked a 4-lb-jack. While playing it, a large pike seized it, and immediately swallowed it. The monster was brought almost within reach of the gaff several times, but at last disgorged his prey minus its scales, which covered the surface for some yards, and departed, much to the disappointment of the piscators, who estimated its weight at 40 lb. The big one is often seen by the marshmen, and we tried for it a whole day without success. It devours so many of

its own kind that the tenant of the fishing desires its destruction, and would net it if he could, but the weeds and boulders (or clumps of flags) render this difficult. Nets and set-lines, and snaring in the dykes at spawning time, thinned their numbers, so that both in quantity and size pike were slowly but surely decreasing. Since the Act was passed, however, there is a great improvement in the pike-fishing. Lately one of 43 inches in length and 27 lb. in weight was caught at Cantley, on the Yare.

In Oulton Broad are great numbers of the grey mullet, which, however, will not take any bait that the angler can offer them.

In the spring the smelt comes up the Yare to spawn, and is stopped in its course by the New Mills, which are built right across the river, in the city of Norwich. Just below the mills, in the heart of the city, the smelter passes the night in his boat, throwing a huge casting-net, by the light of a torch, and occasionally making large catches. Lubbock says: "It is a curious fact that other fish greatly forsake the higher part of the river whilst it is occupied by the smelt spawning. Roach and dace are at that time very scarce, although plentiful enough before the smelts arrive; they then remove further down the river for a time; and, as they say here, 'the fish are down because the smelts are up.'"

The fishermen say that the smelts do not come up the river during an east wind.

The rivers and Broad's will never be so prolific of fish

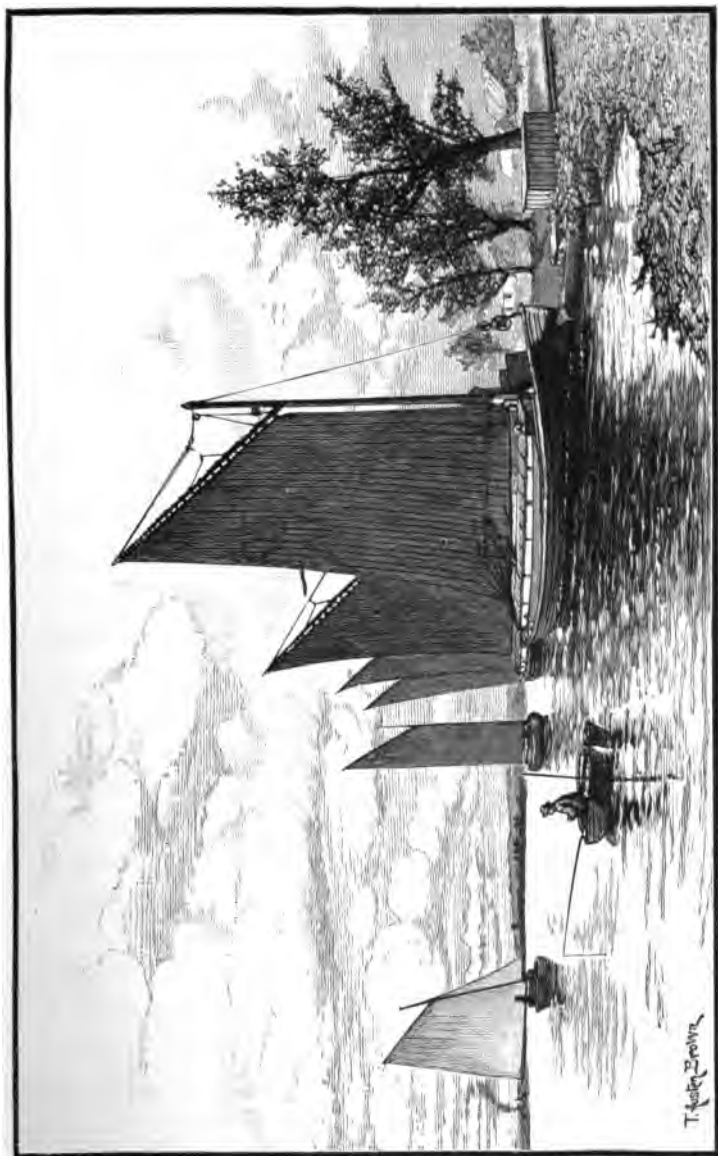
as they once were, because of the great diminution of breeding and feeding grounds, caused by the drainage of the marshes. Hundreds of acres, which were wet and splashy enough to enable the fish to roam over them, are now firm soil; and it need scarcely be said that this diminution of feeding ground must lessen the stock and the size of the fish. .

CHAPTER IV.

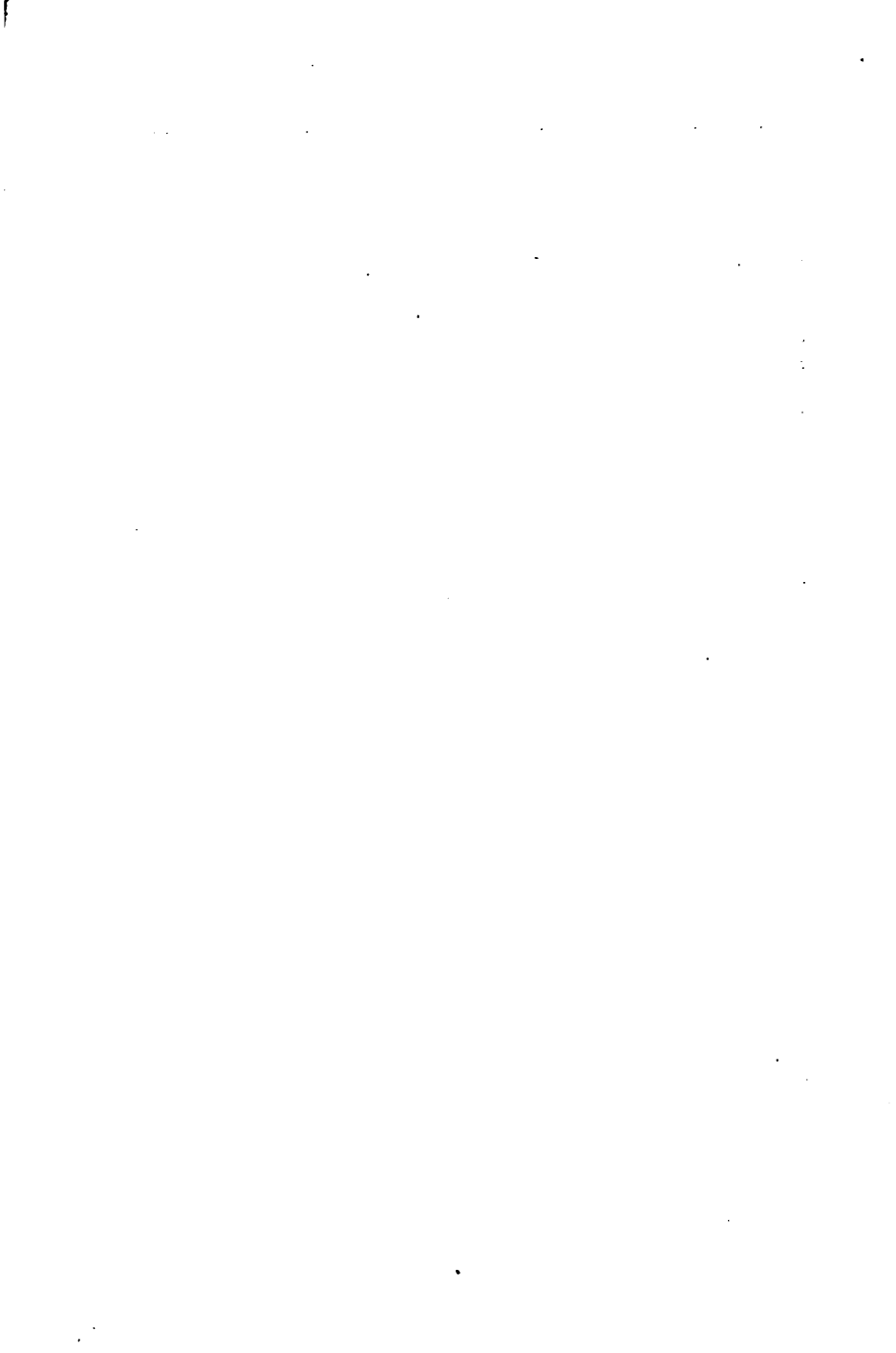
WHERRIES.

No Broad scene would be complete without the presence of a wherry, which is perhaps the most picturesque and graceful of all sailing goods-carrying craft, and certainly the swiftest and handiest of all which voyage on smooth waters. The course of the river through the green marshes is, where the water is itself invisible, marked by the tall high-peaked sails of these craft, which seem to be gliding along the land itself. Then to see one coming before the wind down a narrow channel, with her huge sail seeming to occupy the whole available space; or creeping along the weather shore with her sail sheeted home, going closer-hauled than a yacht, and doing all her steersman knows to slip through a "scant reach" without tacking,—she is a picture of strength and grace.

By means of these wherries there is a large and constant traffic carried on on these rivers. They are sailing craft of from 20 to 70 tons burden, long and shallow, having one tall mast and a huge sail, the rig being on the principle of



WHERRIES WAITING FOR THE TIDE—CANTLEY.



that known as the Una rig, except that there is no boom. Two men, or a man and a boy, or his wife, or even one man only, suffice to navigate these large craft. They sail fast, very close to the wind, and are handy. There is a little cabin in the stern, and abaft of this the steersman stands against the tiller, with the sheet working on the "horse" on the top of the cabin just in front of him. The mast moves on a fulcrum, and the lower end is weighted, so that by means of the forestay one man can easily lower and raise it. When the wind fails, the men betake themselves to the "quant," which is a long slender pole with a knob at one end and a spike and shoulder at the other. The shoulder is to prevent the quant sinking too far into the mud. The wherryman plunges the quant into the water at the bow of his craft, and placing the knob against his shoulder, walks aft along the plankways, pushing with all his might. Many an amateur yachtsman has found this part of the business easy enough; but when trying to withdraw the quant, he has discovered it to be so deeply embedded in the mud that he has failed to extract it, and after a last agonising pull, has either let it go altogether, or if his sense of duty was too strong, has stuck to it until his craft has slipped from under him, and he has had a good sousing. The quant must always be laid with its point towards the stern, and the boat-hook with its point towards the bows, otherwise bad luck will attend the voyage. A friend suggests that the word "quant" is derived from the Latin *contus*, a pole, for the

use of which term in connection with boats, see Virgil, *Æn.* x. 208.

It is wonderful to see how these quants will bend and spring, and what a strain they will stand without breaking. They are slender enough in make, but are of the best and toughest natural grown pines. The men are paid by the voyage; so that a fair wind means money—a head-wind, less money—and a calm, loss. Owing to the winding course of the river, there are always some reaches which can be sailed without tacking. The men will often lose an hour or two of a fair wind or tide in order to wait for and race a rival wherry; and at the various regattas there is frequently a wherry-race, which produces much noise, fun, and excitement. In the winter the wherry-men's life is a very hard one, but there is little actual peril; they are such splendid steersmen that accidents rarely happen. Their craft stick in the mud occasionally, but this simply means a little extra pushing. Occasionally a "rodges-blast" sweeps like a whirlwind over the marshes, lifting the reed-stacks, wrecking windmills, and dismasting the wherries; but this is not of frequent occurrence. We have failed to trace the etymology of this local name for a rotatory wind-squall. There are a large number of men employed in this kind of navigation, and as a rule they are sober, honest, and civil men, ready to give any assistance in their power to the yachtsman. A great weakness of theirs is a fondness for tea. This they boil in the kettle, which then never "furs." The

wherries are built entirely of English oak, and a large one will cost about £500, including the sail and the ton and a half of lead which is bolted on to the heel of the mast, to act as a balance on lowering and raising it. They are so solidly put together, and the ribs are so close and strong, that they last a very long time. Their "lines" are very graceful, with a hollow entrance, and long fine run aft. Those interested in such matters will find drawings and dimensions in an article by the writer in the 'Field' of March 20, 1880. A small wherry of 30 tons burden would be 52 feet long by 13 broad, and would only draw when loaded 2 feet 6 inches of water. A wherry's mast, having no stays to support it except a fore-stay, must be very stout and strong. They are made of spruce fir, and are very massive, yet we have seen a little girl amuse herself by rocking a mast up and down, so carefully was it balanced. A weight of two tons being played with by a little girl, was a curious illustration of the triumph of man's mechanical mind over matter.

The sail is used without tanning until it gets dirty, when it is dressed with a mixture of seal-oil and tar, and so becomes of a rich dark-brown, which in the sunlight often gives the needed warmth of colour to the landscape. The feminine character of vessels is well understood, and most of us have heard of a ship being in stays; but a wherry, when it is fine and the wind is light, puts her *bonnet* on. This is a strip of canvas which is laced on to the foot of the sail to increase its size, and the sail

being hoisted higher up the mast, it is equivalent to setting a top-sail.

We have often enjoyed a sail in a wherry, and if there is a good breeze it is exciting work steering. Their great length is rather embarrassing to one accustomed to small yachts, and they seem to run away from one. The way the masts are lowered when shooting a bridge is startling. On you go before a strong breeze until within 100 yards of the bridge, when the sail is sheeted flat; the man goes leisurely forward, leaving his wife or son at the helm, lets the windlass run; down comes the sail; the gaff has then to be detached from the mast and laid on the top of the hatches; then, just as you think the mast must crash against the bridge, it falls gently back, and you shoot under; up it goes again without a pause, the forestay is made fast, and under the pressure of the windlass the heavy sail rises aloft, all before you have quite got over your first impulse of alarm.

Before a strong breeze and with the tide, the wherries will attain a speed of 7 or 8 miles an hour, and even at that pace, create less disturbance of the water than a small yacht. A laden wherry sails better than an empty one, as the latter carries no ballast except the lead on her mast. Sometimes, but not often, one is upset. Early in the eighteenth century one is recorded as having upset on Breydon Water while coming from Yarmouth, when twenty persons were drowned. She was no doubt bearing a holiday party, as wherries often do now. A year

or two back one was upset by a sudden squall near Surlingham, and went so completely over that her masthead stuck several feet into the mud at the bottom of the river, and held her there. There was only one man on board, and he got ashore safely.

The wherry-men are most civil and careful men, and accidents rarely happen to other craft through their fault. The yachting men recognise that the wherries are on business while they are on pleasure; and if there is a doubt as to what should be done, they give way to the wherry. In all other respects the more closely you adhere to the rule of the road the better do the men like it, for then they know what to do. We have been in a crowd, composed of seven wherries and two or three yachts, all cross-tacking in the same hundred yards of river, with a steamer threading her way between; and although the steering literally had to be to half an inch, there was no apprehension of any accident. The anglers are not by any means considerate towards the wherries. They moor their boats in the channel and at inconvenient corners, and are enraged if the poor wherryman sweeps by close to them, while perhaps it is all he can do to steer his craft so as to avoid running them down.

In the summer-time the life of these men cannot be a very disagreeable one; but in the winter, particularly during frost and snow, when ropes and gear are coated with ice, and the quant is one long icicle, the exposure and hardship is sometimes great. If the rivers are "laid"

—that is, icebound—their usual avocation ceases. Many take to ice-gathering for the warehouses which supply ice for the carriage of fish ; and at any symptom of a frost, men will lay out with their wherries and collect the ice off the dykes, which of course freeze before the rivers, and a wherry may sometimes earn £30 or £40 in a winter. One of the ice warehouses is at the lower end of Oulton Broad ; and on many a hot summer's day you may see the ice pouring in a glittering cataract down a timber-shoot into a vessel beneath.

On fine days wherries go by sea between Yarmouth and Lowestoft, a distance of about nine miles. Many years ago, during a great depression in the traffic, several of these craft went down the coast to try their fortune on other rivers, but the adventure met with ill-luck.

The present wherries are much smarter craft than those of a couple of generations back. At that time there was another class of vessels called "keels," which were fitted with huge square lug-sails, and were chiefly used for carrying timber. These are now unknown. The last we saw was some ten years back on the Bure. We had moored opposite St Benedict's Abbey one chilly gloomy evening, when a keel came up the river before the strong easterly breeze. The immense square sail, as she passed us and drove on, shut out the narrow feeble sunset, and seemed to deepen the gloom around us. She was a very old-looking craft, and so far as we know, she has never

reappeared from the faint western glow in which she then disappeared.

Like their close relatives the Dutch, the water-abiders here are fond of bright colours, and a newly painted wherry is gorgeous with red and blue and yellow. The mast-head is always gaily painted, and is further decorated with a vane, cut in the shape of some nautical figure or emblem, and with a red streamer attached. It is a picturesque sight to see a wherry's deck being tarred. Over a roaring fire a caldron of tar is evaporating into pitch. The boiling liquid is poured on to the deck and spread, while it is rapidly covered with sawdust, which is trodden down by a war-dance on the part of the men. The object of this is not only to keep the deck water-tight, but to give a better foothold to the men when quanting. Again, we have seen a picture worth painting when a wherry has been canted over by means of a rope from her mast, and in a boat alongside men in the picturesque waterside costume are burning the tar off her bottom with huge torches made of bundles of reeds as big as wheat-sheaves. And oh, the delightful smell of the tar! Speaking honestly, a bit of tarred rope has a sweeter fragrance to us, and a greater wealth of association, than the choicest posy of flowers.

Wherries are often fitted up as yachts, and may be hired for the purpose, and very comfortable cruising craft they make.

Well, we have gossiped enough about wherries; but without them the rivers would be far less interesting, and they are admired greatly even by non-aquatic minds,—so that if we stop here we may be forgiven.

This chapter is placed at an early stage in the book, because of the frequent references to these craft which necessarily occur.

CHAPTER V.

THE CRUISE OF THE COYA—OULTON TO YARMOUTH.

WE wonder how many men, with the means and opportunities of taking their annual holidays abroad, can yet say that the beauty of their own country has prevented them ever leaving it at a holiday time? For ourselves, there are certain quiet spots in England which, having once charmed us, hold us yet, as the Ancient Mariner held the Wedding Guest. Next year, perhaps, we may break the spell; but there have been many "next years" during which the spell has grown stronger. Then the places we like we have a burning desire to show to our friends; and so it was that the skipper persuaded the mate to accompany him in a cruise on "The Broads and Rivers of Norfolk and Suffolk."

The preparations for such an expedition, where you are to be your own housekeepers, cooks, servants, and general storekeepers, and where your amusements include fishing, shooting, and photography, are multitudinous.

The skipper had made an especial point of being well

found in liquids; but when the wine-merchant's man placed a large array of bottles of stout and beer in the stern-sheets, and left them to the mercy of the hot sun while the skipper was cleaning out some lockers, it was rather hard lines for the latter to have to make tracks for the forepeak, to escape the fusilade of corks, and fountains of foam and good liquor which attacked him in the rear. The mate looked dubiously at the pile of luggage on the cab, the tiny yacht which rode at her moorings on the placid lake, and the minute dingey which professed its readiness to take us on board; but notwithstanding the doubts he looked and expressed, the chaos produced by unpacking rapidly became order, as cunningly devised lockers received their contents. At last the only thing which had not a satisfactory location was the box containing the photographic apparatus, which was a perpetual shin-barker during the voyage.

The Coya was a 4-ton yacht, especially adapted for single-handed sailing.¹ She was 20 feet over all, by 7 feet 9 inches beam, with a large centre-board. She drew only 2 feet of water with the board up. Her cabin had 3 feet 8 inches head-room. It does not admit of a standing position. When you want to stand, which at certain stages of dressing is advisable, you must go into the stern-sheets or well, where, when at anchor, a tent is made by means of an awning over the boom. The mate called the cabin a respectable dog-kennel; but by the time experience

¹ The Coya has since been superseded by the Swan.

had taught him where the knocks came in when you incautiously moved about, he had come to regard it as a spacious apartment. It certainly was uncommonly cosy, especially at night, with the lamp lit, and the curtains drawn over the windows. The yacht was rigged with one large sail, *Una* fashion, and was the handiest boat possible. She was also fast, particularly in a breeze, and was just the thing for knocking about these inland waters.

She was then lying on Oulton Broad, with the water like a mirror around her. Not a breath of wind cooled the air; the low shores were indistinct in a quivering haze, and the great bowl of the blue sky was so perfectly continued in the water beneath, that the double images of yachts and boats seemed magically suspended in a hollow globe of air. The absolute stillness was only broken at times by the splashing of a shoal of grey mullet; and in a dead calm the evening drew on, and the stars were as brightly mirrored in the lake as they shone in the sky. A light breeze sprang up as we were turning into our hammocks, and as neither of us was sleepy, we listened to and wondered at the indescribable and mysterious noises which proceed from ropes and spars on a breezy night. Rap, rap, rap, the halliards against the mast plainly; but creak, creak, rattle, rattle, and then a heavy footfall along the deck, and a patter, patter, like a dog running across! Yet there is nobody there. There is no fear of any molestation however, so we need not be nervous.

In the morning we were early astir. One does get up early in the beginning of a cruise, the fresh air is so bracing and invigorating. Besides, the early worm catches the fish. After a while, however, one has to exhort one's companion to get up by letting down his hammock. Fishing is voted slow, and early worms dirty. Then, what is the good of getting up early when others get up earlier? There were guns banging away before dawn, and there were no ducks left for us, so we hunted milk and eggs instead. The skipper met with an indignity this morning. He had with much labour and abrasions and cuts constructed for himself a punt or dingey, of which he was very proud; and a man who was spearing for eels, while waiting for a flight of fowl, offered him thirty shillings for it as an eel-trunk!

All that day the skipper had to take an active part in the management of a regatta on the Broad, and it was not until the next morning that the cruise actually began, and then we commenced a long beat against a light northeasterly breeze to Yarmouth. And now we became subject to the slavery of the photographic-box. Whenever we saw a picturesque drainage windmill, a cottage in a group of trees, ancient ruins, yachts or wherries, making a pretty picture, "Oh, we must have that!" and the yacht was run up to the bank. The mate would drag forth the big box and deposit it on the skipper's toes, and the skipper would trip up the mate with the tripod. Then the mate would do the focussing and exposing, while the

skipper "shoo'd" off the too curious bullocks and cows, or dispensed valuable advice. We used the dry-plate process of course, and had the plates developed when we got home. We over-exposed most of them, for it seemed impossible that a second's exposure should suffice; and the skipper constantly urged, when not engaged with the cows, "Give it another second to make sure." Still we obtained a great number of excellent pictures, well worth all the tides and winds we lost through the constantly recurring delays.

We had a friendly contest with a wherry which did not like being passed, and hugged the shore so that we could not get to windward of her, and had to pass to leeward—always a difficult operation, on account of their great sails shutting off the wind. Then we had a narrow escape of a smash. Haddiscoe swing-bridge has two openings, and we made for the windward one. Two wherries close upon our heels also made for the same, while there were some meeting wherries going through the other opening. All at once it occurred to the skipper that he would lose the wind under the lee of the bridge, and thereby lose headway, while the wherries with their lofty canvas and great weight would outrun the yacht and make matchwood of her. So in stentorian tones he requested them to make for the leeward opening, and they altered their course only just in time to avert the accident. The right bank of the river was a steep declivity covered with gorse, heather, and fir-trees, which the mate looked lovingly upon, for they reminded him of his own country.

At St Olave's bridge we had to lower the mast, which is a troublesome operation, and then we had a monotonous beat down the river, with the tide going out at a rare pace, until we came to Burgh Castle. We landed here, and raced up the wooded hill with our camera to take the magnificent walls and towers of this extensive Roman fabric; and so interested were we that we spent more time there than we ought to have done, for when at last we got into Breydon Water, we found the tide against us and the wind falling, so that we made but slow progress. It was a lovely evening, with an orange glow in the west which was reflected back from the tanned sails of the wherries as they came up from Yarmouth with the flood, and, brightest of all, from the yellower sails of a top-sail barge from Kent. She came along in stately grandeur, with her lee-boards up as the wind was fair; but the lighter and faster wherries were rapidly overtaking her. Here and there was an eel-spearer in his punt, striking regularly into the soft mud, anon lifting up his spear to shake off a writhing eel. There is a hut built on an old fishing-boat, wherein dwells an eel-fisher who is now mending his nets or threading lob-worms on to worsted for the purpose of making an eel-bob. Here is a smelt-fisher hauling in his long brown net, while his wife is picking the glittering, cucumber-smelling smelts out of the meshes.

Over the great mud-flats which at low water are visible on either side of the broad channel, the gulls, kittiwakes, and terns are wheeling; and in the intersecting streams

and runlets, the herons stand with a regularity of distance apart we have often noticed. Here are seven in a straight line, with a space of ten yards between each. As we near them they straighten out their long necks, then lower them horizontally, then curve and twist them in a ludicrous hesitancy whether they shall take flight or not, perhaps flying away just when we have passed and the danger to them is over.

The wind had quite died away as we reached the lower end of Breydon, and the swift tide was bearing us backward. The water was too deep for us to quant our punt, too light to enable us to tow, and there seemed nothing for it but to anchor, when a man rowed off from the quayside to our assistance. He knew how to cheat the tide by taking advantage of the eddies and backwaters; and towed us through the bridges at the mouth of the Bure, the mast being lowered, and saw us safely moored at Yarmouth quay. The day's sail was twenty miles.

We went on to the pier, but fled from its music-hall unpleasantness and sought refuge in the Aquarium, where we were chiefly amused by the inability of a "tightly-tied-back" young lady to get down off a chair she had incautiously mounted, presumably with masculine assistance. Our cosy brightly lighted cabin was, after all, the best, and thither we soon retired. The water of the river was phosphorescent, and as the tide swirled past the quay and the black bows of the vessels, it evolved shimmering lines of light and fire-fly sparkles.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRUISE OF THE COYA—THE HUNDRED STREAM.

NEXT morning we were up at five, in order to save the two hours of flood which remained, and as there was no wind, the skipper took a long tow-line ashore and towed the yacht a couple of miles away from the town. As he was panting along, with his cap in his hand, his body at an angle of 45° , his feet in the mud, and the hollow in the front of his jersey showing that he was breakfastless, a bargee looked on him compassionately, and said, "And so ye calls that pleasure, master!" A swim, and bacon and coffee put the skipper all right; but he begs to record his opinion that it is not wise to do any hard work before breakfast. (Nor, the mate adds, before or after any meal.)

The wind was light and from the north-west—a head-wind in most of the reaches—and the beat against the tide was rather slow. The country was intensely flat, and lacking in the picturesqueness of the upper waters. It was late in the afternoon when Acle bridge, thirteen miles from Yarmouth, was reached; but that well past, the river

was wider, its current slower, the scenery on the banks more luxuriant, the landscape softer and more beautiful, and best of all, as we bent to the northward, the wind was fair. Creeping quietly along, with the boom well out, the Coya entered the mouth of the river Thurne, and while the mate sleepily steered, the skipper got out his pike-line and trailed an artificial bait behind. It was not long before he had a run; and as the yacht was brushing the reeds, he made a wild jump ashore, and after a frantic struggle with the coils of the main-sheet, whose obstructing presence he had ignored, he got right end up, and finally landed a nice pike. Then the mate must go ashore in like haste with the camera; for just in front there was a farmhouse bowered in trees, a windmill, and a group of peasants exquisitely mirrored in the calm water.

A mile further we stopped for the night near an eel-set. These eel-boats are precisely like the Noah's arks of childhood, and are of ancient appearance; we have never seen a new one. The tanned nets, which are hung up to dry upon stakes around the dyke in which the boat is moored, are carefully kept and well mended. Through the night the eel-fisher sits in his cabin, like some great spider in his web, waiting for the eels the stream will bring to his net. Long usage and prescription are the rights by which these eel-sets are maintained, and they are valuable properties. New ones are not likely to be established, for the anglers are jealous of the few pike and other fish which may—though but seldom, in our opinion—share the fate

of the eels. The pleasure of the many is like to prove too much for the livelihood of the few; and we are sorry for it in this instance, for there is enough for all, now the great drag-nets are abolished. Talking of drag-nets reminds us of a clever capture made by one watcher. He saw a party of men dragging the river one dark night, and watched them retire to their wherry, into the cabin of which they entered, shutting the doors to keep in the tell-tale light. Now these doors are fastened by a bar on the outside, and the watcher stealthily boarded the wherry and slipped the bar into its sockets, securely entrapping the men until he returned with assistance.

In the morning we passed Heigham bridges, and scanned the wide expanse of reed and water in search of the masts of a friend's yawl which we had appointed to meet hereabouts. There to the left are two masts rising into the blue sky out of a forest of green, and after many devious turns, we enter Kendal Dyke, and round to opposite the Nymphæa, whereon are a parson and a captain. They are in sore straits, and we are only just in time to rescue them from the fate of drinking water, for they are reduced to the villanous and undrinkable compound sold as beer in Norfolk villages. We transferred ourselves and sundry bottles to their yacht, and made them happy. Figuratively speaking, they were knee-deep in fish, caught that morning in Heigham Sounds. Great silver-sided roach and crimson-finned rudd lay in their jolly-boat; eels played hide-and-seek among the bottom-boards; worms wriggled

on the seats ; and grains, boiled rice, and wheat lay about in profusion. You cannot go fishing in Norfolk without these elements of a mess. Of course you must not lose your way amongst them. A large apron is an essential part of the angler's costume.

After lunch we sailed up the deep clear dyke, which presently opened out into the expanse of water and reed known as Heigham Sounds, then narrowed again between its reed-forests, to open out again into Whiteslea, then contracted once more, to finally merge in the glorious waters of Hickling. The Broad is 400 acres in extent, but seemed much larger ; for its glittering waters were bounded by low and indistinct shores, looking in the summer haze more like thin banks of mist or cloud resting on the water than a boundary of land. A huge Y lay on the lake, written in massive posts which marked the channel—the latter branching into two, one leading to Catfield and the other to Hickling Staithe.

In the channel even we touch the bottom with a centre-board at times, but when we haul it up we can sail anywhere over the Broad ; and it is a singular sensation that of sliding quickly over green weed-beds and golden spaces where the weeds have not taken root, and with only 30 inches of water. Before the introduction of centre-boards the yachts used on Hickling were beamy shallow boats, drawing only two feet of water, and lateen-rigged. Their remains lie pretty thickly on the banks, where they have been hauled up and abandoned. The long flat boats used

by the marshmen and reed-cutters are not rowed, but are "set" along with a setting-pole after the fashion of the Thames punting. They often startle you by shooting out of a dyke, when you fancy you are all alone with the fish and the wild-fowl. In the winter Hickling Broad is a rare place for coots, which gather there in abundance, and a day's coot-shooting each year is a time-honoured institution, in which numbers of boats take part.

The crew of the yawl had returned to their fishing on the Sounds, and we ran the Coya in, and dropped the anchor in three feet of water. When we were tired of catching roach, we got a live bait out for a pike, and caught a very large perch immediately. As a rule we did not fish much on our cruise, because we did not know what to do with the fish we caught. We couldn't eat bushels of rudd and scores of pike; so we contented ourselves with catching a few when we lay to in the evening.

This day, and indeed every day, we were astonished at the number of hawks which were always visible hovering over the marsh. Kestrels, marsh-harriers, and hen-harriers would be in sight together. Often they let us come quite close to them as they perched on the top of some reed-stack or cock of the coarse marsh-hay—a recent gorge probably being the cause of their disinclination to move. The skipper watched one hen-harrier from a hiding-place within ten yards, noting how the sun glinted off his blue-grey back. Occasionally a crow or a pair of peewits would

make a spirited attack upon one, and there would be many rapid wheels and turns and clatter of wings ere one or other of the combatants sheered off. Always, too, there were coots and water-hens making intersecting ripples across the water; herons standing in some lonely, reedy bay; reed-wrens lilting some sweet fragment of song; reed-buntings chattering busily; wagtails running over the broad undulating lily-leaves, and picking little black flies off the snowy petals of the flowers. If you pick a lily-leaf, by the way, you will often find it pierced by small holes, and on the under edge of these holes are the eggs of some insect, laid three parts round like a horse-shoe.

When the Coya was tired of fishing, she spread out her great white wing and essayed to leave the Broad. But which way? The skipper had not taken his bearings as he came on, and the wind had shifted; so, after a sail round by reeds of bewildering similarity of grouping, and passages which seemed but to end in reeds, he had to ask the captain and the parson, "Which is the way out?" and on their making mock of him he charged the thinnest belt of reeds, and by good hap emerged into the dyke. Then we sailed back into the Thurne, with the yawl presently following, and sailed up with a wind which from now always seemed to be fair until we came to Martham Ferry. Here the river is made artificially narrow, and a huge raft, long enough to stretch from one bank to the other, is kept in a recess on either side, and is drawn across

when any one requires to use it. If the raft is on the other side of the river, the wayfarer must wait until some one approaches on that side—and in that lonely neighbourhood this may be a long time. Now men were busy carting hay, and they had left the ferry across, so the yachts had to lie to while two of the crew swung the great mass aside. Just beyond the ferry both yachts moored to the bank close together, and both crews passed the evening together, the parson telling witty stories, and the captain singing "Vanderdecken," with a bull as an interested hearer. The animal had strayed past the yachts along the narrow strip of firm land, on the other side of which was an impassable bog. Now the lamps were lit he was afraid to come back again past the boats, and was an unwilling prisoner, charging anybody who went ashore unarmed with a mop or other implement of defence, but drawing back when he came to a ray of light. He kept lowing threateningly, and was rather a nuisance, as he stood mounting guard a few yards away. That night the skipper and the mate sat up late changing their photographic plates in the darkened cabin, lit only by a dim red light. Just as they finished there was a great noise on deck. "It is that bull coming on board," cried the mate, and we bolted out of the cabin armed with a dagger and a pistol, which were two of the ornaments of the cabin; but the bull was on shore, whence his eyes gleamed in the darkness. The skipper had left his rod on the cabin-top and his line in the river with a live bait attached, and now

the line was being pulled out at a great rate, and the big wooden reel was thumping about on deck. Something monstrous was on, but if it were a pike it was a very sluggish one. In the dark it was ticklish work landing it; and in the midst of the excitement the captain came picking his way along the rond clad in his night attire and knee-boats. By the light of a candle we found that the fish was a large eel, the largest we had seen. It had taken a good-sized live bait at mid-water. We ultimately got it into the landing-net, and kept it there until morning, when the captain undertook the cooking of it. It was cut into chunks, parboiled, and then fried, and five of us ate it for breakfast. We had no means of ascertaining its weight, but at a guess it was 5 lb. The next morning the bull was in the same spot, within ten yards of the yachts, which he was afraid to approach, although he was not in the least afraid of any person who emerged from the vessels on to the bank. We felt sure he would have passed us in the night, and it was rather a nuisance to have so pugnacious a spectator. All that glorious August day we were very lazy. We walked into the village of Martham to buy provisions; we fished and caught more roach, perch, and pike than we wanted; we photographed, bathed, and explored various long and lilled dykes, and the lonely sheet of water known as Somerton Broad, but all in the most leisurely and lounging way it is possible to conceive. The wind was fair for every way we wished to sail, and was soft and fragrant with the hay then being

carried. There was no one visible, and no sign of human life as far as the eye could reach, except occasionally when, from some opening in the reeds, a large boat piled up with hay, a floating stack hiding its support, was poled by two or three men. The coarse marsh-hay, used principally for fodder, is cut and piled up by the banks of the dykes, and is then carried by boats to some convenient spot, where it is unloaded to await a further removal to the stack. The picturesque nature of this method of hay-carrying is further heightened by the costume of the haymakers. Some time ago this part of the country was inundated with straw hats, said to be Chinese, having enormous brims, and sold for a penny apiece. These now form the usual summer head-gear of the labourers on the marshes. A large yellow straw hat with a broad red ribbon round it, a blue jersey, and great thigh-boots, formed the haymaking costume on the Martham Dykes. The men have good-looking faces, with long pointed beards, and are usually tall and spare, with a serious cast of countenance befitting the loneliness of their occupation.

The usual routine of the day was this. At seven o'clock the skipper would awake, and would, other persuasions failing, let down the hammock of the mate to induce him to rise. Then the awning was turned back, the bedding put upon the cabin-top to air, the cabin cleared, and the kettle set to boil, while the skipper and mate bathed and made their morning toilet. Then one of us went to the nearest farm for milk and eggs, while the other fried the

bacon or fish and made the coffee. Breakfast over, came the task of washing up and stowing away, scrubbing the decks, and tidying, by which time it would be ten o'clock; then sailing and exploring until evening, when came dinner or tea. Then a quiet evening's fishing, reading, and talking; and finally, hammocks at ten, and a sound, sound sleep till morning.

That night we moored by a steam drainage mill, and we inspected the machinery. Surely there must be some better way of raising the water from the lower level of the drains to the higher level of the river than the turbine-wheel, which is everywhere used. This is a narrow wheel of great diameter, with floats like those of a steamer's paddle-wheel. It revolves in a narrow trough, to which the drain-water has free access, and dashes the water up to the higher level. Many of the older mills, and indeed many if not most of the houses by the rivers, lean one way or another, through the sinking of the foundations in soft earth. Like Holland, this is a country of leaning walls. A tall tower of one of the mills on the Waveney, lately rebuilt, used to lean over in a most remarkable manner, in apparent defiance of the laws of gravitation.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE CRUISE OF THE COYA—HORSEY MERE AND
HICKLING AND BARTON BROADS.

NEXT morning we were aroused by a roar from the captain. He was bathing, and had his toe unexpectedly seized by a crayfish. He was fond of crayfish, however, and spent a long time fishing with his toe for another bite, in hopes of catching the dainty crustacean. Although his patience met with much encouragement from us, he did not succeed. At what age, we wonder, does one cease to be a boy, provided one's digestion is good and one's conscience kind? There were four big fellows, who would be sedate enough in a town, as full of pranks as four schoolboys. Would that all the fun and jollity made up of trifles could be pictured in print! It would be better than any medicine to many a man.

The reeds were madly convulsed by a strong south-west wind, and we hoisted sail and parted with the yawl for a space, to explore Horsey Mere and Hickling. We turned out of the Sounds into a deep dyke, which was

so narrow that we could scarcely have turned in it. Its width was under ten yards, and the bends were sharp and numerous. We lowered the peak to lessen our speed, but we tore along with the boom brushing the tops of the reeds, and the swell caused by our passage washing high up their stems. We had met a wherry at the entrance, where there was just room for us to squeeze past. What we should have done if we had met her further in we hardly knew. The dyke was a mile and a half in length, and at the end of it we emerged into Horsey Mere,—a mere enchanting if not enchanted; there was no sound save

“ The long ripple washing in the reeds.”

If we had the brand of Excalibur to fling into the mere, surely from its flashing waters would rise the arm,

“ Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,”

to catch it by the hilt and draw it under in the mere.

It was a circular lake, with a border of reeds and low alder-bushes. Perfect, utter loneliness reigned there; the water was clear and bright. No objects were visible on the western half of the horizon save a distant sail; and on the east, nothing but a range of high sand-hills sharply defined against the blue sky; beyond there was the roar of the sea. We left the Coya anchored in the middle of the mere, its lonely queen, while we rowed ashore and walked to the sea, a mile and a half away. Topping a great sand-bank, a vast seascape spread below us, covered

with vessels of many rigs. The busy appearance of this scene was a deep contrast to the silent region of mere sand and reed which lay behind us. Horsey Mere is 30 miles by water from the sea, and a mile and a half by land, and there are but a few feet difference in the level. The rise and fall of the tide at Yarmouth are felt at Horsey. The clouds were gathering in huge and threatening masses, and the wind was rising; so after a long swim in the salt water, we walked back to Horsey. We should have liked to have caught some of its famous pike,—

“ Horsey pike,
None like,”

is the distich,—but the storm was coming up. We donned our waterproofs and sou'westers, and got under way, for we wished to be at Hickling that night.

Our friends on the yawl saw us cross Whiteslea and enter Hickling Broad, and then we passed out of their sight; but they saw following us a whirlwind lifting the reed-stacks,—a regular “rodges-blast,”—and they were anxious for our safety. We were warned of it by the roar it made passing through the small wood, and we topped our boom and lowered our peak just as it caught us. It struck us dead aft with a bewildering force, and then the Coya recovered from the shock, and tore along before it at a quicker pace than she had ever gone before, rolling from side to side and wallowing in the surf the tempest raised in the shallow water, with sudden and frequent jibes as the course of the wind shifted to and

fro. The Broad was white with foam, and seemed suddenly increased in size. We ran to Hickling Staithe just as the gust steadied down into half a gale from the south-west. These roddes-blasts seem to come with a south-west wind. We remember one day waiting on the staithe at Coldham, on the Yare, whistling for the wind, while the cutter *Zoe*, with all sail set, was moored by a strong rope to a tree. It was a dead hot calm, when, without any warning, a whirling puff of wind came upon us. The *Zoe* was thrown over almost on her beam-ends. She snapped the mooring-rope like a piece of thread, shot out into the river, and then luffed up herself,—there was no one on board,—and drove her bowsprit through the wood-casing of the staithe and deep into the soil behind, whence it was a work of time to extricate it. The blast passed in a moment, and there was again a dead calm.

The thunder-clouds came up from the south-west, and made the darkness of that night between the lightning-flashes a thing to be remembered. At each flash the white water of the Broad and the tossing and bending reeds were brilliantly visible, and then we could not see each other as we stood together on the deck. The roll of the thunder over the watery waste was most awe-inspiring; and yet between the crashes, in fiendish contrast to the majesty of the night, were the loud and impious ravings of a drunken solitary wretch who lived in a little hut hard by, and who had chosen this night of all others for an outbreak of blasphemous rage. The

lightning was striking the trees near, yet this man's cottage was mercifully passed by. Near us a drainage windmill had been carelessly left going, or had broken its fastenings, and the sails were whirling madly round, while the whole structure creaked and groaned, and its levers thumped as if in excited response to the storm. For long we stood and

“Saw God divide the night with flying flame.”

Over a wet bit of meadow close by there hovered a small, flickering, phosphorescent light, always visible in the darkness; but when the lightning-flashes illumined the spot, there was neither man, beast, nor thing there, nor any cover for such. The light was clearly natural, and in all probability a veritable Will-o'-the-wisp. It was late ere we took to our hammocks, but then neither the war of the elements nor the great noise of the rain on our decks kept us from sleeping. In the early morning the storm cleared away, but the wind was still high. A wherryman came on board to inspect our little yacht, and we told him about the Will-o'-the-wisp. He said he had seen them several times, and that he had fired at them, the shock of the explosion putting them out. If you did not fire at them they were likely to come near you, and “do you some hurt.” He saw one once which seemed much larger and more locomotive than ordinary, and he followed it with his gun for some distance. When he at last overtook it, he raised his gun to fire, when a

voice came from the darkness. He had been stalking a man who was gathering worms, and whose lantern, held close to the ground, had misled him.

The next day, with two reefs in our sail, we sailed back again over Whiteslea, the Sounds, and up the Hundred Stream past Martham, in search of the yawl.

We found her moored in a corner of most sylvan loveliness, under the lee of a copse, and amid the water-lilies. There was no one on board; and trying fishing, we found we had hit upon an angler's paradise, and we fished until we were tired of pulling out the perch and roach from a deep clear pool at the bend of the stream. Then the crew of the yawl appeared out of a long dyke which they had been exploring, holding up a pike in triumph, for they were enthusiastic fishermen. We sailed back in company to Heigham bridges without any incident, save the atrocious misses which the skipper made when he shot at any passing fowl.

"If this goes on," quoth the mate, "the birds will get cheeky!"

At Heigham we set off to photograph the ruined church tower of Bastwick, the skipper carrying the *impedimenta*. The mate burst out into a laugh, and said—

"I have been wondering what you looked like. I have it now. You are precisely like a travelling acrobat, with your india-rubber shoes, white trousers too tight and too short for you, blue jersey, red cap, chin like an aged broom, black box, and bundle of sticks—ha, ha, ha!"

Now the skipper had left off shaving, thinking that in a fortnight he could grow a luxuriant beard ; but it was only isolated hairs which grew luxuriantly—the others didn't. So he felt that part of the gibe, and responded in kind—

“ And you look like the tramp in the song—‘ homeless, ragged, and tanned ; ’ ” but like the same happy fellow, there were “ none so free in the land, none so contented as we.”

We left Heigham with a fair wind and a strong wind, all sail set, and sped along at the rate of a good eight miles an hour, with jibes that brought the 20-foot boom slashing over with a force that tried the mate's arms as he rallied in the main-sheet. Then we entered the Bure again, and turning to the right had a stiff beat against the tide to St Benedict's Abbey, which we photographed. This abbey was of yore a very extensive monastery, and its abbot a man of power. Its site was an island of gravelly soil amid a morass, and the only means of access to it was by water, or along a causeway which the monks constructed to the village of Horning. Now the ruins are very scanty. Over a fine arch a windmill has been built, and long since also become a ruin. At a little distance is a massive wall, which is now supported on round stone pillars. This puzzled us very much, until the farmer told us that the sheep had so burrowed under the wall seeking shelter from cold winds, that he was obliged to build the pillars to support it. A neighbouring wall has fallen from the same cause.

Opposite the abbey is an old bend of the river, the neck of which has been cut by an artificial dyke ; but if you sail down this old bend and down a broad shallow dyke you will come to South Walsham Broad, which is very lovely in its surroundings, particularly the further portion of the Broad, the banks of which are well wooded. A mile further we came to the mouth of the river Ant, up which we turned with the intention of making Barton Broad that night. We lowered the mast at Ludham bridge, the smallest bridge on the rivers, and after sailing a mile or two further, the wind dropped entirely. We determined not to be done, and as the banks are pretty firm, we took it in turns to tow. While the skipper was trudging along with the rope on his shoulders, a donkey came trotting up to him with a sympathetic bray, plainly saying, " Are you too reduced to this labour ? I know what it is ; look at the marks on my shoulders ; " and the ass actually walked side by side with the skipper, brushing against him and looking up at him in the most comical way, until they were stopped by a dyke which necessitated the skipper getting on board again.

It was a perfect afternoon and evening ; a hot sun shone out of a cloudless sky upon the hay-fields where the hay-makers were turning or carrying the hay, the corn-fields where the corn was fast ripening, upon the still placid surface of the canal-like river, which was dimpled by rising fish, and hottest of all upon the patient backs of the skipper or the mate, as each in turn hauled at the tow-line.

Peace and contentment reigned everywhere: the eel-fisher mending his long array of nets; that red-coated soldier teaching the yellow-haired little girl to fish; that boat-load of patient, quiet, and successful anglers; those sleek, satin-coated cows, apparently gazing at their own reflections in the water; the old gentleman seated in the arm-chair at the foot of his garden, also fishing,—all seemed blissfully content with the charming present. Then we passed Irstead shoals, where the river is but five feet deep, with a level, hard, gravel bottom beloved of perch. Then came one of the most picturesque eel-fisher's abodes we had seen, being a small yacht hauled up on the bank, and propped up, with the stern cut off, and a ladder leading into the cabin. Then Irstead Church, on a wooded hill and very beautiful. This church and the eel-hut we photographed next day.

All at once we glided on to the Broad and dropped our anchor in its silent waters. The sun was setting behind a church on the opposite side—the tower of which was silhouetted on the great red disc. On the water beneath, a narrow, well-defined band of crimson light stretched across the lake towards us, and down the centre of this was the equally well-defined black shadow of the church tower. As this singular sunset faded away, the air became filled with myriads of swallows. No words could give an adequate idea of the swarming multitudes, nor the bewildering effect to the eye as they flew to and fro over the water, and as far upwards as the eye could see them. As

the dusk deepened they gathered into a vast cloud, and quickly disappeared in an easterly direction. It was the 12th of August, and although the date was so early, there can be little doubt that we witnessed the commencement of their migration. As the night drew on, and the stars shone clear and bright in the dark-blue cloudless sky, a brilliant meteor shot across the heavens. Then another and another, and presently, for the space of an hour or more, there was a constant succession of falling stars. We saw them as brilliantly in the water as we did overhead; and no observer of the star-shower which fell that night could have been better placed than we were.

At three o'clock the next morning the mate awoke the skipper and said, "There is some one getting on board." The skipper emerged, wrathful at being disturbed from his comfortable hammock. There was a man with a boat holding on the yacht.

"What do you want?" growled the skipper.

"I've brought you a fine tench for your breakfast, sir," said an unknown voice.

"I don't want to buy it."

"And I don't want to sell it to you. If you can't take it as a present, I'll hull (throw) it overboard." And he left the skipper with a fine 4-lb. tench, alive and kicking in his arms like a baby. The man did not stop to be thanked. He was an utter stranger, except that he may have been an eel-fisher with whom the mate had a short conversation the night before.

Barton Broad is a fine sheet of water, being 200 acres in extent. Its shores half-way round are prettily wooded, and it has one or two islands. There are several channels marked out by posts, and they have a fair depth ; but if you get out of them, you may get stuck on one of the "hills," as the natives term the shallow portions. While we were there, a wherry with a picnic party on board got on, and remained there half the day. The bottom is soft mud of an unknown depth, offering little resistance to the quant when one shoves. A steam-launch and a few boat-loads of people made the Broad less lonely than those we had lately been on. A party of workmen sailing to their work down the river, the boat laden with windows, door-frames, and paint-pots, was a sight characteristic of a neighbourhood where the water is the chief highway. We spent the morning sailing about and catching pike, and then we desired to post some letters and buy some fresh meat. We rowed in the jolly to Irstead, but we found there was neither shop nor post-office in the village. We went to Barton, where, after a long walk, we found a person who sold us some fresh pork ; but there was no post-office, and the people did not know where there was one, but there might be one at Neatishead, three miles away. So we tipped a boy to go in search of a post-office. As our letters reached their destination, he ultimately found one.

We boiled the tench and a pike for dinner, and very good the former was. The pork-chops we unfortunately

had for supper. In the evening we drifted quietly off the Broad, and three miles down the river, and then lay to for the night. We had another disturbance. The skipper forgot to take in his rod, and during the night a pike seized the bait, and made a clatter with the reel. The pork-chops were heavy on our consciences, and we were greatly startled at the sudden noise. We had to go on the roud to land the pike, which was a good one; and it must have been a comical sight—two shivering white-robed figures hauling out a pike by the light of a candle. The pike was knocked on the head and placed in a locker amid the empty bottles. We were hard asleep again when a dreadful clatter made us jump out of our hammocks, and almost out of our skins. It was the resuscitated pike testifying his indignation among the bottles.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CRUISE OF THE COYA—ON THE BURE.

NEXT morning the sun rose hotter than ever, and we felt disinclined for exertion. We gave the pike to a man who was going to and fro with a large boat carrying hay. Shortly afterwards he came to the skipper, and said, "Did you give me two pike, sir?"

"No; only one. Why do you ask?"

"Well, sir, ten minutes after I left you, there was another pike in the bottom of the boat still alive, and lying by the other, and exactly the same size. I can't make it out."

He evidently doubted the skipper's veracity; for presently he went to the mate and asked him the same question, to which the same answer was given. The man was too polite to tell us we were liars, but he evidently thought so. How the second pike got there we had no idea, except that it may have leaped on board of itself. We frequently read in the 'Field' of large trout

leaping into boats on the Thames, and this pike may have followed their insane example.

As the wind was fair, we made a flying start, or rather we attempted to do so; but the sail would not go up. The peak-halliard had not been hooked on. This omission was rectified, and the sail hoisted, when the peak unhooked itself, and down came the gaff, the hook of the halliard flying up to the block. There was nothing for it but to climb the mast; and the skipper accordingly swarmed up the slender slippery spar, 27 feet in height, and brought the truant hook down. Then the forestay was found unfastened. "I tell you what," said the skipper, as he lay panting in the cabin, "this is going to be an unlucky day. We must take especial care when we lower the mast at Ludham, or we shall meet with an accident; and this cabin, which is generally cool, is as hot as an oven."

Lowering and raising the mast of the Coya is an operation which takes all the strength and skill of two men, and a slip when it is half-way down would be serious. As we were in an unlucky vein, we took especial care, and accomplished the undertaking without any mishap, except that the skipper greased the mast when it was down, that the jaws of the gaff might travel freely; and then, forgetting the grease, kept his best blue jacket on while lifting it, and so spoilt the cloth for ever. Ludham bridge is very small, and a light wherry, being high in the water, has much difficulty in squeezing through. We photographed one in the act. It was intensely hot, and we did not know what

to drink. Beer is out of the question, claret is rasping, lemonade does not quench the thirst; lime-juice and water, milk and water, and weak cold tea are the best. We kept our liquids icy cold by the simple expedient of wrapping the bottles or jugs in cold towels, and exposing them to the sun. The hotter the sun and the quicker the evaporation, the colder was the liquid. We tried wetting our pugarees, too, to keep our heads cool.

After leaving the Ant we sailed up the Bure with a fresh breeze across the river, which somewhat mitigated the heat. Turning down a long straight dyke on the left, we entered Ranworth Broad, and dropped our anchor opposite the church. Ranworth Broad is now practically divided by the reed-growth into two, which present the same characteristics as the other Broad. A famous decoy was once situate here, but has long been dismantled. The Broad was very still and quiet on this hot day, and beyond an occasional roll of a large bream in the reeds, all Broad life was stilled into sleep, and we were inclined to sleep also.

Presently spoke the mate: "No wonder the cabin was so hot! We put the cooking-stove away alight, and there it has been burning for five hours!" Here we lunched and spent the middle of the day, lying on the deck basking in the sun, watching the great bream bending the rushes as they swam in the shallow margins, listening to the cries of coot and water-hen and duck, and the sleepy insect murmurs; then it occurred to us that yonder water-

laved lawn, with its great trees, the house half seen through flowers, and the church above and beyond all, should be photographed. The plate was duly exposed; and then the mate, in a fit of absent-mindedness, unscrewed the lens to examine it, leaving the plate still exposed, and, of course, ruined. The mate's denunciations of his own stupidity were certainly justified. We took another photograph, and then hoisted sail and sailed back into the dyke. Along this we had to quant, as the wind was ahead and the dyke too narrow to tack in. The skipper poled her along, and about half-way up he placed his quant on a lily-root, which held until he got his weight on to it, and then gave way; the quant went through, and the skipper followed it souse into the water, which was ten feet deep. "Keep her going!" he cried, as soon as his head reappeared; and regaining his pole, he swam after the yacht, clambered on board, and was again poling away before he quite realised that he had been overboard. The worst of it was that he had donned his shore-going suit, and, of course, there was not a dry thread in it. Most sailormen become a little superstitious, and we took this as a warning that if we went on sailing that day we might culminate in something serious. So when we reached Horning Ferry, a river-side inn where anglers resort, we lay to for the night, and got the wet things dried at the inn. We had compressed more mishaps into a short sail of ten miles than happened to us during the whole of the rest of our fortnight's cruise. The moral was, not to eat

pork-chops for supper. A summer evening at Horning Ferry is always full of interest. Anglers are coming in laden with fish; yachts round to and lower their sails to make snug for the night, and their crews gravitate to the inn, where the best of good cheer is obtainable. Perhaps, in addition to the fishing and boating men, there is an entomologist in search of the swallow-tailed butterflies which abound here, or of the other rarities for which this district is famous among collectors: and when the summer night descends, and pipes and grog are the order of the night, gossip of the water, of fish, and of natural history, makes the hours go by only too swiftly. A great pike frequents the river in front of the inn; and one winter day when the waters were out, and the green lawn in front of the inn was the only bit of dry ground near, a covey of tired partridges settled on the ferry-raft hard by. On the door being opened they flew away, but not far; for one fell into the river, and was immediately drawn under by the pike, and the rest alighted on the marsh, and were drowned and picked up by the landlord.

The skipper woke early, and finding it was a lovely morning, caught a small roach, put it on the live-bait hook, and threw out his pike-line. Then he lay in his hammock watching the butt-end of his rod, and fell asleep again. When he awoke the rod was plunging violently, and sixty yards of line were out, the reel being emptied. Rousing the mate, he got his rod and went ashore to follow the pike down the river, the mate following with the

landing-net. They were still under the impression that it was five o'clock in the morning, and they made no addition to their robes of "white samite, mystic, wonderful." It was in fact eight o'clock; and when they had followed the fish some way from the yacht, reeling in line, they became aware that they were the "cynosure of all eyes" in a fleet of fishing-boats then leaving the inn. It took some time to land the fish, which was a 7-pounder, and had got under the weeds; and the mate urgently begged the skipper never again to fish save within reasonable hours, and in correct costume.

From Horning Ferry to Wroxham is nine miles, and that was the extent of our day's sail. It is perhaps the most beautiful stretch on the three rivers. Woods, meadows, corn-fields, eel-sets, yachts, wherries, boats, crowd upon the eye. Lilled pools, green-bordered shadowy dykes, and sequestered Broads, invite detours and explorations. The clear brimming river laves the drooping grasses and the blue forget-me-nots. The deep purple fringes of the reeds toy with the bending branches and rustling leaves of oak and alder. The jewelled kingfisher sways on a reed, a yellow iris flower bending over his blue back. As the seasons change, so the colours of the river-side vegetation change; and when the great leaves of the water-docks are yellow, and the trees drop their many-tinted leaves on the dimpled river, the gorgeous masses of colour, and the variety of them, are beyond any feeble words of ours to picture.

We sailed to and fro as fancy willed or the breeze blew, and in the gloaming anchored on Wroxham Broad, where we watched the western light die away, the stars glimmer out one by one in the sky, often first seen in the water. Moonlight nights that cruise we had none ; but often and often on these lonely waters have we felt the sweet charm of the soft moonshine when the quiet lake and the whispering reeds were clothed with the chastened brilliance.

As we passed Horning village the children greeted us with a song, with which the children of Horning have greeted every passing yacht for generations :—

“ Ho, John Barleycorn ! ho, John Barleycorn !
All day long I raise my song—
Ho, John Barleycorn ! ”

The motive of the song is, of course, coppers. Its origin is unknown ; but even the three-year old toddlers join in, and the general effect is pleasing.

Saturday came, and fresh meat was wanted. There was none to be had at Wroxham ; but there was a butcher at Coltishall, two miles by road, eight by river, so we sailed there. When the butcher was found, there was but one piece of meat left, but it was a capital loin of mutton, and we had sumptuous dinners on Saturday and Sunday. Coltishall is a typical English village, and picturesque withal. Just above is the first lock on these waters, and spanning the side-stream is Horsted Mill, which made a pretty photograph. A Norfolk water-mill is, *sui generis*, very large and very old. It is usually built across the

stream, so that the undershot wheels may be worked by the full force of the stream. There is not sufficient fall to work an overshot wheel. The river has been made navigable as far up as Aylsham for wherries drawing under three feet of water ; but there are several locks and mills. The navigation for vessels of 13 tons burden, and "carrying 9 chaldrons of coals," was completed in 1803, after much financial difficulty.

From Coltishall down to Wroxham, some eight miles or so, the river is very sinuous and very pretty. Nearly midway is a channel leading through some disused chalk-workings, which is known as Little Switzerland, because of the precipitous nature of the banks. This part is now private ; but if permission can be obtained to visit it, it is well worth the trouble.

Belaugh Church stands on a high promontory, and is a conspicuous object for many miles. The river winds near it, as though loath to leave it. From Wroxham Bridge down to the Broad, a distance of about two miles, is, however, the most charming portion of all the river for placid water, and woodland scenery, and wealth of flowers and grasses pressing down to the brimming river. Fortunately this part will always be open to the public ; for, in the reign of Edward III., the king impleaded the Abbot of St Benedict's, who had encroached on the banks and water that extended from Wroxham Bridge to Black Dam, which the king claimed as an arm of the sea, where ships and boats arrived, loaded and unloaded, without toll or any custom.

On Monday we sailed about near Wroxham Broad, having ladies on board. At their bidding we gathered them the red berries of the guelder-roses, and water-lilies and purple reed-tops ; and we have made a vow that we will never have guelder-rose berries on board again, for the litter they and the brittle branches make is past belief. While anchored on Salhouse Little Broad, we fed a shoal of rudd with crumbs. The fine, fat, crimson-finned, golden-eyed beauties jostled each other in their eagerness to take the crumbs almost out of our hands ; and when one ran off with an extra large piece of bread, others followed him, and there was a fine swaying of the lily leaves as the eager fish struggled beneath them.

So ended our cruise. To the man that cares for sailing and fishing, and to the artist, we heartily recommend a similar cruise. It may not be very exciting or eventful, but it is very jolly and very cheap. The cost of provisioning yourself is easily calculated. The cost of hiring a yacht and man is from £4 to £6 a-week ; and two or three people would find the divided expense very light indeed compared to other modes of spending a holiday. Norwich, Yarmouth, and Lowestoft are the headquarters of yachts for hire ; and local inquiry or advertisement will soon elicit the necessary information.

CHAPTER IX.

YACHTS AND YACHTING.

It may well be imagined that boat-sailing is a favourite amusement on these waters. Local necessities have induced a type of boat which is in many respects singular, and which, as far as speed and handiness are concerned, is unequalled by any other fresh-water type in the kingdom.

The general rig is the cutter or sloop, but in the old times the almost universal rig was the lateen, the most picturesque of all rigs. The foremast raked forward over the bows, and the huge wing-shaped foresail was set on a yard sometimes twice the length of the boat. This yard was hinged at its lower end to a short boom, so that the shape of the sail was like a swallow's wing. The other mast was in the middle of the boat, and bore sometimes another lateen, but more generally a fore-and-aft sail like the mainsail of a cutter. The boats were very bluff-bowed, to support the weight of the foresail, and in running before a strong breeze they would "run down" so

much by the head that they sometimes sank. Going to windward they were very handy, and would creep up wonderfully close to the wind. Very few are now left of this rig. Many of the old hulls are in existence, with the rig altered to that of the cutter; one we know is at least a hundred years old. A very fine lateener, the *Ariel*, hails from Beccles, and is a valuable accessory to the summer scenery of the Waveney; another, the *Black Maria*, is on Barton Broad; another on Wroxham,—and these, with the exception of one or two ancient craft at Norwich, are the only survivors of the old lateeners. The term yacht is quite a new one here. The old yachts were simply called pleasure-boats, and this just describes them to a nicety. The lack of railway and inn accommodation and the length of water-way rendered a cabin necessary, and so all the small yachts have cabins, in which two persons can pass a night or two without much discomfort, and a large open well, which gives plenty of space for day passengers. In some of the older boats the keel was barely half the extreme length of the boat. This was partly to gain handiness, and partly to cheat the measurement rule, which was formerly (and still is, Barton and Hickling way) the length along the keel or “ram.” A large immersed counter is the rule with all the yachts, and the bowsprit projects outboard about the length of the keel. A 3-ton cutter would have a boom of 25 feet, a gaff of 20 feet, and a bowsprit of 17 feet outboard, the actual length of the boat itself being 23 feet. Without going

further into technical details, it will be seen that these small craft carry an enormous amount of canvas. It is safe enough, because they are as a rule skilfully handled, and if caught in a heavy squall, they can always run up to the bank and lower. During races, however, when the crews carry on to the last extremity, some of the competing yachts have filled and sunk. Once in a 10-ton cutter we were caught in a squall just as we were putting about. The weather-jib sheet got foul of something which prevented her luffing up, and over she went on her beam-ends, with the water rushing in over the shoulders of some ladies who were on board. They pluckily sat still, and everything being let go, she righted, and drove ashore half full of water.

As the Broad district cannot be well visited except by boat, this mode of conveyance assumes great importance. To be an *habitué* of the Broads, implies that you know something of boats, and in all social gossip on the subject on which this book is written, yachting and boating of necessity occupy a prominent position. And even to a non-aquatic mind, the sight afforded by a regatta or opening cruise of one of the clubs, is one calculated to arouse enthusiasm. The mountains of canvas supported by mole-hills of yachts; the order and method which characterise every motion of the crowded fleet; and the intense interest in the sport evidenced by the crews themselves, are pleasant to see. In a race, if the wind is light, words are spoken in whispers, lest any tremor should shake the wind

out of the swelling sails. If the wind is strong, then the yachts careen over to the very verge of safety, and the heaviest of the crew lie along the weather plankways by way of ballast. The starts are generally made from buoys, or from the windward shore, frequently with all sail set. "Are you ready?" the sails fill; men hold frantically on to the restraining ropes; *bang!* goes the starting gun, and the yachts bound away like greyhounds from a leash. Then how the steersmen watch the wind coming over the swaying reeds and grasses of the marsh, to take the fullest advantage of every puff as it reaches the river! Not an inch is lost on any tack; fouls are avoided by hair-breadths; sheets are humoured to every slight change in the direction or force of the wind; and to sum up, in no part of England is the sailing more scientific or exciting than it is in Norfolk. Yachts have been designed and built in the south especially to beat the Norfolk craft, but have very much failed to do it.

Nearly all the yachts have their masts fitted in tabernacles, so that they will lower. Weights are put on the heel by way of balance; and on the smaller craft the operation is not so laborious and risky as it seems. In a 10-tonner which had no weight on the heel, we once let the mast drop while attempting to lower it at Yarmouth, and did a good bit of damage, in addition to two of us experiencing the narrowest of escapes from being struck.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club and the Yare

Sailing Club are the chief boating associations, and can make a goodly show of craft on an opening cruise.

Yachts are moored to the bank or anchored on a Broad, just where they happen to be left, and the smaller ones have no one in charge of them. They may remain for weeks at a time in some lonely spot, and no one ever thinks of breaking on board—or at all events hardly ever. The Swan was broken into recently and plundered, which has somewhat destroyed our faith in the water-abiders; but, as a rule, the watermen are honest with respect to anything appertaining to boats—bar mops. Mops do go. In other respects you need not fear any molestation. Of the scores of times we have slept alone in the yacht, far from any human aid, if aid were required, we have only been disturbed by men three times. Once at Barton, as told in the “Cruise of the Coya”; a second time at Stokesby, when some eel-men towing their boat up got on board to pass their line round the mast; and once on the Yare, when we were awakened by the sound of voices on the bank. Three or four men were holding a subdued colloquy over us. We could not distinguish what they said, but they remained debating something for a quarter of an hour, and then moved off. What they were doing at two o’clock in the morning we did not think it prudent to inquire, and we remained apparently fast asleep.

We cannot close this chapter without alluding to the successor to the Coya—the Swan. The latter is a var-

nished oak 4-ton centre-board, with unusual accommodation for her size. A good sea-boat, she is easily handled by one person, and will sleep two luxuriously, being a great improvement on the cramped quarters and somewhat ugly appearance of the Coya.

CHAPTER X.

WROXHAM BROAD.

ONCE a-year at least people go to Wroxham, on the occasion of the great annual picnic known as Wroxham Regatta ; but every day and all day long the Broad has many visitors, for its beauty is great, and it is but seven miles from Norwich. Boating-men, fishermen, and pleasure-seekers generally enliven its broad bosom. Well does it deserve its popularity. On its western margin there are wooded glades quivering with sunlight and shadow ; green park-land and fruitful fields ; cattle standing knee-deep in shallow bays under the shade of ancient trees ; and all the accompaniments of quiet rural English scenery. On the eastern side there are reed-beds, low coppices, rank and tangled vegetation, and spacious marsh and lake and river, with always a warm flush of colour. The freshness of the spring is doubled by reflection in the still water ; the glow of summer is mellowed by the quivering haze from the Broad ; the glories of autumn gather intensity from their mixture in the palette of the lake ; and the pale yellow of

the dying reeds is in the brief sunshine of winter brightened into gold. In all its aspects the Broad has a charm which is irresistible, but greatest, we think, when the silence of the night enfolds it; when the stars shine below and above, and the noises of the night, of bird and fish, alone break the stillness. It has not the eerie loneliness of the wilder Broads, but a soft restful quiet which is a sure medicine for a restless mind.

The water has a greater depth than any of the other Broads, but even here the decrease of depth is apparent to the watermen. Formerly a navigable channel ran through this Broad, and the river skirts its eastern outline so closely that nothing but a narrow strip of road lies between. The upper entrance has been closed, and the lower one is now the only one open to the public.

At the upper end is a labyrinth of reedy capes, lilled bays, and bushy islands, which it is pleasant to explore, but where visitors are not encouraged, because of their disturbance of the wild-fowl.

The Broad is full of fish, and a friend tells us that he used sometimes to start a brood of moor-hens across the Broad and wager as to how many would be seized by pike; and in one haul of a long net 19 good pike were caught.

The Norwich artisans will walk from Norwich on the night before any holiday, hire a boat, row on to the Broad, moor their boats, throw in their ground-bait, and then lie down and go to sleep, ready to commence fishing at the

earliest dawn, when they will probably get two or three stone weight of bream by breakfast-time.

One night two or three yachts were anchored on the Broad, and a fishing-party was arranged for the morning. At 11 o'clock it was suggested that the spot should be ground-baited. The enthusiastic anglers turned out in a jolly-boat for the purpose. There was a mist so dense that, although it was a moonlight night, the boat was not visible a couple of yards from the yacht, and the mist was as wet as it could be. Looking upwards it seemed luminous, as if the moon were shining through ground glass. The fishermen in the jolly had considerable difficulty in selecting a spot, which, when found, they marked with mooring-poles. On their return they reported that several boat-loads of anglers had already taken up their position, and were lying down in their boats unprotected from that penetrating mist. At three o'clock in the morning our own keen anglers turned out and disappeared in the same thick mist, while we returned to our snug hammocks and felt the more contented because of their discomfort. That morning was memorable because of a desperate fright some of us got through the inadvertence of another. A. was rowing in his cockle-shell of a jolly from one yacht to another, and being in no hurry and rather lazy, he lay down on the flat of his back in the bottom of the boat, and began to enjoy a drift. B. and C., not seeing him from their respective yachts, immediately concluded that he had gone to the bottom, and jumping

into their dingies rowed frantically towards the spot, rehearsing in their minds how they should break the sad news to his (A.'s) wife. A. hearing the splutter, jumped up, and thinking they were attempting a lark with him, rowed away, crying, "Sold again!" to their immense indignation. The rest of the proceedings were stormy.

The regatta is generally held in the month of July, and lasts two days. It is simply a huge water frolic, the racing being quite a secondary consideration. It is the one occasion on which the larger yachts from the other river visit the Bure. The fixed bridges at Yarmouth and at Acle are serious impediments to the larger boats, as the mast has to be lifted out of its step and lowered, with the assistance of a wherry, or sometimes two, one on each side of the yacht, their masts and halliards being used for the purpose. The smaller yachts have much less trouble, as their masts are fitted in tabernacles, and lower easily with counterbalancing weights.

You can see so many miles over the marsh that the yachts are visible long before they are near enough to be recognised, and it is pleasant to speculate on what yachts are coming as sail after sail comes into sight, and is seen now in one position, now in another, as the reaches of the river twist and turn; and pleasant are the anticipations of good-fellowship, for all come with the intention of being civil and companionable. Generally a night is spent on the way, perhaps at Horning Ferry; and when the yachts are all laid up, there is much running to and

fro for various articles which are sure to be lacking. On one occasion there was a dearth of bread—nay, a famine; for every one had calculated on being able to buy bread at Horning, and every one was disappointed. Now the bakery for Horning, Wroxham, and the district round about is at Salhouse, which was a good long way off. Further, this bakery only bakes once a-week, and takes no heed of Wroxham Regatta, so there was dire tribulation among the assembled boats.

On the Broad it is a pretty sight to see the white clouds of canvas suddenly appear through the “gateway” leading from the river to the Broad, and when yacht after yacht drops her anchor (or its equivalent weight) much hospitality and jollity prevail. Occasionally, too, the spirit of mischief is abroad, and when the fleet awakens there is not a jolly to be seen. Every “painter” has been unloosed, and every little boat towed away and hidden in the reeds. Loud is the outcry and profuse the—well, not benedictions—on such an occasion.

On the morning of the race-day there is much scrubbing and cleaning of yachts, and an exodus to meet the trains at Wroxham station, which bring ladies, friends, and hampers. Wroxham Bridge presents a lively scene, and all the wherries on the river seem collected here to take freights of holiday-makers to the Broad.

The Broad itself at mid-day is crowded, and careful steering is needed if one gets under way. As for the racing, the majority of the people neither know nor care

for what is going on. The bright sun, the glancing ripples, the gliding yachts, the gay dresses, and the appropriate lunches, are matters of more importance. The watermen, however, take a keen interest in the racing, and every bit of good or bad steering is exhaustively criticised. Towards the latter end of the day, indeed, the arguments become too forcible, and are perhaps clenched with blows. As a rule, however, the assemblage of watermen are good-humoured even if drunken.

In secluded nooks among the reeds, too, one may see boats with but a pair of occupants,—needless to say they are of the opposite sexes, and are enjoying the regatta after their own fashion, only disturbed by the swell caused by obtrusive steam-launches careering at full speed around the lake.

In the evening there is a return stream of yachts and wherries up to the bridge, and the latter are generally as crowded as they well can be. Their steersmen, alas! have asked too often, "How's your appetite, sir?" the wherryman's way of hinting that he would not object if you stood treat. A drunken wherryman, however, can steer as well as a sober one, and you need not be afraid of his running you down.

The second day's regatta includes a wherry-match, which, if there is a breeze, is exciting. Also there may be a quanting-match, which gives the poor fellows some excessively hard work and much tribulation when defeated.

CHAPTER XI.

WROXHAM BROAD IN WINTER.

THE winter of 1879-80 was a long and hard one, the frost lasting for several weeks. It set in shortly before Christmas; and one fine day a barge-yacht sailed on to Wroxham Broad and cast anchor. A friend of ours had hired her for the winter, and had up to this time found his cruising about, shooting and pike-fishing, very pleasant. He of course noticed the signs of frost, but did not imagine that the Broad would freeze over so quickly as it did. He slept too soundly that night to hear the tinklings of the ice-crystals as they shot over the smooth surface, and consolidated until the whole lake was "laid."

But when he arose in the morning, he found that he was ice-bound, and the ice was already so thick that it was with great difficulty he broke a short lane to a more convenient mooring-place near the shore. And there, for six or seven weeks, he was imprisoned. The barge was a comfortable craft of some 30 tons, and as the Broad was every day populous with skaters, his en-

forced detention there was not unpleasant. A night we spent with him will always rank as one of our most interesting experiences of Broad life.

During the day we skated about the lake, exploring corners where boats could not penetrate in the summer. The covert of reeds, which in the summer is so dense and sturdy-limbed, was then dead and dry, with the stalks broken down at every conceivable angle, and every withered blade frosted over with glittering ice-powder. The reed-wren's nests were now easily seen, and it was no hurt to cut the three reed-stems which supported one, and carry it away as a memento. The brown trees rose out of a thick carpet of snow, and their branches were bowed down with the white wreaths clinging to them. It was rough travelling over the ice, except where long lanes and spaces had been swept, and ankles and legs were tired of the pleasure when the early night came down. The skaters all departed, and the frosty silence was intense after the noise and shout and laughter of the day and the keen swish of the skate-blades on the ice. The stars twinkled so brightly and so *fast* that they seemed to *tinkle* as well, and the night developed into the coldest of that cold winter. When one drew breath through one's nostrils, they adhered together with a momentary freezing, and one's teeth had need be sound ere a breath could be drawn through them. Yet, cold as it was, we saw a solitary bat flying about. Under such circumstances a good dinner in a warm cabin was an enjoyable thing; and afterwards the

atmosphere grew so thick with smoke that we scarce could see each other across the cabin.

When all the yarns were told, and sleep could no longer be denied, we turned in, covered with all the bedclothes, rugs, ulsters, and coats we could command, to withstand the arctic cold. We were just dozing off when, with a noise like the loudest thunder, a crack ran from one side of the lake to the other, its sound reverberating through the woods. The yacht shook sensibly with the concussion. After this all was silent for half an hour, and then another crack startled us from our first sleep. From this time there were big cracks and little cracks, firing off volleys of artillery for hours, the louder making the boat shake again, while after one she gave a heavy lurch and rocked awhile before settling. Our companion slept through most of this, but our nerves were too excitable, and we lay awake waiting for the next explosion. Sometimes there was a low growl, then a sharp vicious snarl, then a report like a gun, and then like a crash of thunder. The ice was "on the work," probably through the influence of the tide affecting the level of the water. The sounds ceased at five o'clock, and then the cold became almost unbearable. During an uneasy slumber, a knee had got uncovered and was aching with cold. The blanket under our chin was covered with rime, and there were icicles on one's moustaches. The fires were out, and it was a weary, sleepless wait until the first peep of day gave us permission to get up and go out with the gun.

The scene had changed, so far as the Broad was concerned. While, the night before, its surface was white with snow, save where scored by the swept places, now it was black and hard alike. The water had welled up, and covered the ice, melting the snow, and then the whole had frozen into a solid mass, from the smooth surface of which the pale gleam of the sunrise glanced coldly up. The sound of our boots crushing through the deep snow and dead grasses on the rond, sounded crisply and loudly in the morning air, notwithstanding all our care to tread lightly, as we proceeded to a spring where the water never freezes. There was no duck there, however; and as we have elsewhere stated, a hard continued frost drives the fowl away to the coast.

The absolute stillness and lack of life is very marked at such times, as it contrasts so strongly with the abundance at other times.

During the day several skating-parties came down by river, skating all the way from the bridge. They took the precaution of carrying coils of rope with them, in case of accidents, for there are always places in rivers where the water does not freeze so readily as in others.

One day in the following winter will ever be remembered. A thaw had taken all the snow away, and a subsequent frost had made the ice safe again. Then came a day of perfect beauty, bright and sunny, and mild as an ideal spring day. On that day the skating on Wroxham was simply marvellous. The ice was so clear and smooth

it was difficult to believe that there was any ice at all covering the water ; and the reflections of the marginal trees, and of the few cloudlets in the blue sky above, were very striking. The moisture of the surface, induced by the thaw, was no disadvantage unless you fell down ; and with so much elbow-room and such capital ice, you might rush about to your heart's content. Figure-skating was at a discount with such a space to invite to speed. Then you could see the fish and weeds below you, and there seemed so little solidity in your support that it was easy to imagine that you were flying through mid-air—an impression that was heightened by the undulatory movement the weakening ice acquired towards the close of the day.

On some of the shallower and smaller Broads people amused themselves by chasing the pike, which were easily visible under the ice, until they were fairly run down and turned belly up with fatigue, when a heavy blow on the ice with a stick would stun them until a hole could be cut to get at them.

A novel way of setting trimmers on a frozen lake is to cut an aperture in the ice, run a stick through the hole in the centre of the trimmer, and lay it across the aperture, so that when the line is run out the trimmer revolves like a wheel, and cannot be dragged under.

A frozen Broad, particularly Hickling, with its 400 acres of water, would be a capital place for sailing on skates or in ice-boats ; but so far as we know, the experiment has not been tried.

CHAPTER XII.

A WEEK END AT SALHOUSE.

THE story of one such week end is the story of many ; and for quiet idyllic enjoyment and rational healthy recreation, combining to give a firmer tone to body and soul for the labour of the ensuing weeks, such intervals of rest are most valuable.

On a Saturday evening in August we (in this case the author and his wife) go on board the Swan at Wroxham Bridge, and in company with another yacht drop down with the lazy current. The faintest of zephyrs just fills the sails, and with the occasional help of the sweep or the quant, where the shelter of the copses causes a complete calm, we glide along with not a ripple at bow or stern, so gentle is the motion. The sturdy oaks are motionless, but the feather tops of the reeds nod now and then, and the willows quiver as if a breeze were coming. By park and wood, by farm and Broad we go, until we reach the narrow and shallow entrance of the smaller of the two Broads at Salhouse. We have just sufficient way to part the leaves



SALHOUSE DYKE.



of the lilies and enter a clear space, where the anchor is dropped. As we stow the sails, the bats and the owls are already abroad, and the ducks are starting on their nightly search for food to the spots which they dare not visit in the day-time. The darker shades of the pool are lit up by the white forms of swans moving about with ghostly silence ; the water-hens and coots are busy swimming to and fro with much jerking of necks and loquacious cackling. On the westward shore there is a gravelly tree-clad hill, with a hollow at the foot in which nestles a farm, the smoke from the chimneys of which rises straight up and disperses in the twilight air. From the farm a road curves down to the water-side, where there are boat-houses as ancient and picturesque as the trees which overshadow them. A wherry laden high with hay enters the Broad, impelled by some mysterious air in the peak of her lofty sail, and with slow and stately motion crosses the Broad, reaches the staithe by the farm ; her black sail drops, and she is at rest for the night.

An awning made of oiled canvas is spread over our boom and distended by stanchions at the side, and thus forms a capital and roomy tent over the well. This is the dining-room ; and when a hanging lamp is lit, a portable table set up, and a comfortable meal spread thereon, what more can the heart of—the water-loving—man desire. It is now dark, and suddenly one of us exclaims, "It is raining heavily—listen to the patter of the drops on the tent ;" but on looking out it is bright starlight, and there

is not a cloud in the sky. Yet the patter goes on continuously, and at last the cause is discovered. The light shining through the yellow canvas attracts the insects, which dash against it in myriads. It is covered with their carcasses, and moreover, the globe of the lamp itself is obscured with them. Fortunately they don't bite, but the gnats do ; and this is the one drawback to camping on the Broads. Those who are very sensitive to gnat-bites will get severely punished unless they adopt some precaution. The best thing is to rub camphorated vaseline over the neck, wrists, and ankles, which are the parts generally most sensitive to their bites. The marshes can boast of the biggest and hardest biting gnats to be found anywhere. They can give mosquitoes ten yards in fifty and beat them.

Our friend in the other yacht had never seen an eel-set taken up ; so after our meal and the disagreeable but necessary process of washing up, we row down to one about half a mile distant. All is dark and still, and the hut looks deserted. In answer to our hail, however, a man's head appears through a hole in the top ; and when he finds out who we are, he gladly promises not to take up his net before five o'clock in the morning, so that if we wake early enough we can go and see the process. As we re-enter the Broad, we see the shining translucent tent reflected perfectly in the water, so that the illumination appears to be doubled also.

Bed-time ! the hammocks are unfurled, and hooked by each of the four corners to supports. Then as the middle

of each hammock will sag down on the seat, an air-cushion has to be blown out to place beneath it, and an air-pillow for the head. We creep into our blanket-bags, put out the lights; and hey, presto! it is daylight again. Half-past four; no time to be lost, so the writer rows out to call his friend, and we go down to the eel-set. It is taken up with many eels and one baby jack in. As the process is alluded to in another chapter, it need not now be described. The grey morning gives promise of a fine day, and the bream are "priming" in shoals on the top of the water. Into the hammock again, but not to sleep, for a small boy from the farm has got up early too, to take up his night-lines which he has set for eels, and he makes quite a commotion rowing about and shouting in his glee at pulling in the eels. Then the cocks begin to crow, the cattle to low, the geese and ducks to cackle and quack, and the day has begun in earnest, brightening into a sunny, summer Sunday morning, every item of nature which has a voice raising it in a pæan of gladness, and every item that has only a smile looking gay and content. The lark in the sky and the reed-bunting in the sedges, according to their capacities, join in the song, which is welcomed by the trees and the grass fresh from the bath of a dewy night. The sacred flowers, yellow and white, in the midst of which we lie, are opening their waxen petals to the crisp fresh breeze, and as the yacht swings she presses down the broad lily leaves, which rise again unabashed.

Before all the necessary cleaning and scrubbing are over,

a boat-load of people crosses the Broad on their way to Hoveton Church, a clergyman visitor among them. Many people, we believe, who would go to church in a carriage would think it a sin to go in a boat, and perhaps even think it sinful to lodge in your own yacht over a Sunday. Let them ; there are wiser people in the world, who are content to receive its blessings at all times.

Then comes a leisurely stroll between the lanes, so sweet-smelling and gaily decked, and over the yellow corn-fields to Salhouse Church. Under the spreading tree by the church a knot of early-comers have gathered, and when it is time we all troop in together. The doors are left open and the fresh fragrant air plays freely around you ; the sunlight falls in checkered patches on the floor and pews ; the twittering of the birds outside is plainly audible within, as is the pleasant sougling of the wind in the boughs. A peaceful, happy, restful service is this, with such accompaniments ; and as we walk homeward (the yacht soon feels like home) we are certainly disposed to look on the brightest side of things in general, and believe the best of everybody.

From the summit of the little hill a characteristic view is obtainable. Immediately below us lies the little Broad, with the Swan in the centre ; from it a narrow dyke leads, under a rustic bridge, to the larger Broad, where, by the way, two tiny sailing-boats have anchored side by side, and their crews have passed the night underneath their awnings ; then there is the curving river, throwing back

from one reach a dazzling flood of sunlight. Beyond the river, Hoveton Broads, Great and Little, and in the distance Wroxham Broad, each sheet of water shining with blue or silver as it catches the light, and each set in a bright green frame: no æsthetic greens or browns are here, but good honest bright colour, as if the marsh-grasses and the trees loved the sun (as they do), and put on their Sunday best to meet it.

After dinner, the long lazy afternoon is diversified by a sail down to Horning Ferry for tea and back again; and a fine evening, but more breezy than the last, ends the pleasant day.

The Monday comes bright and fair, with a good breeze blowing, and as it is Bank holiday, a lively day may be expected. By the middle of the day Wroxham Broad has many yachts and sailing-boats careering over it, bending and springing to the fresh breeze; family parties in capacious rowing-boats are gathering flowers in the marginal jungles, and anglers are mooring their boats everywhere. Further on in the afternoon, you will often see their occupants stretched along the thwarts fast asleep, overcome by the strong air and the sun. On Salhouse Broad is a fishing-party who have taken six stone of good bream since early morning. On the banks of this Broad is a clump of the most gigantic of bulrushes, their russet-brown heads contrasting strongly with the pale green around them. The downy seeds of the bulrush-heads are sometimes used to stuff pillows with, and very soft they are said to be. Near

this particular clump is a little cove with an eel-boat and hut drawn up on the bank, under an arch of foliage, making altogether a pretty picture.

Opposite Salhouse Broad are Hoveton Great and Little Broads; the former a large shallow sheet of water, and the latter fast growing up and dotted all over with beds of rushes. The American weed, *Anacharis alismastrum*, had increased to such an extent in Hoveton, that the grebes, being diving birds and greatly harassed by it, forsook the Broad for a time; but the weed has died off in a remarkable manner, and the grebes have returned and are now plentiful enough there.

Between Salhouse and Horning Ferry is Woodbastwick Broad, a circular piece of water of good depth, accessible by a long dyke. It is surrounded by trees, and from the number of herons we have seen resting there, we are inclined to think that there must be a heronry thereabouts.

Among all these Broads and dykes there is something fresh to be seen and learned every week end that is spent there.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANTINGHAM PONDS.

IF instead of going to Stalham we take the stream to the left, which is the main stream of the river Ant, we shall find it a narrow river, down which, however, the wherries dash just as if they had plenty of room, and they swing round the frequent corners so briskly that one marvels they do not sometimes fail their helm and run up high and dry on the rond. It is not a yachting stream this, as there are bridges and locks and mills, but wherries go up the river and the canal which it presently joins, up to North Walsham; and to judge by the number of wherries one sees on its narrow waters, there must be a good carrying trade from North Walsham downwards. Two railways, however, meet at North Walsham, and it is probable that some of the trade may be diverted from the navigation and cause it to be less used; the natural result of which will be that it will become less and less navigable.

The canal passes through a swampy district, and there are remnants of Broad's along its course—Broad's which

have come to that end which is beginning on nearly all of these East Anglian lakes. Out of these, however, some pretty little backwaters are left slumbering between the reeds and sedges, where large pike and perch are said to be. An autumn day would be pleasantly and profitably spent among these bays and half-hidden pools ; and in the neighbourhood of the mills and locks there are picturesque little bits of quaint warm-coloured scenery that are worth preservation in a sketch-book.

At the head of the canal are Antingham Ponds, and it was here that we spent a memorable winter's day. It was cold and bright and windy as we stood on the bank of the small shallow lake that lay before us. We were bent on catching some of the large pike which a small boy told us he had seen through the ice in the winter time ; but the pool could not be fished without the aid of a boat, and the only boat was not inviting. In its best days it would not have been a safe craft, but now it was rotten, patched, and guiltless of paint. When it was launched, the water spurted in tiny streams through a score of holes. We determined at last to venture ; and with a pair of odd sculls, both sadly the worse for wear, and thole-pins extemporised out of bits of stick, we pulled out against a wind blowing half a gale, and causing choppy waves which splashed over the gunwale. The pool was extremely shallow. Half an acre of it at the upper end was but six inches deep, while the yellow mud seemed bottomless. By the way, why is it that the mud in the rivers and in many of the Broad's is black, and in

some other Broad, particularly the shallower ones, it is yellow? In the same Broad there is often this variation, and as everywhere the mud must be the result of decayed vegetation, the difference is curious.

Well, at Antingham we rowed about in search of deeper water, and when we found two or three feet of it we let go a stone for an anchor and fished with live bait. We were only moderately successful; but it was not the sport that made the day interesting, nor was it the scenery, which was not out of the way—it was the struggle to keep afloat. We had to sit with our feet tucked up to keep them dry, and one of us had to bale continuously. We found that one side was less like a sieve than the other, so we both had to sit on the same side to keep the other out of the water. When we did catch a fish our precautions were neglected for a time, and then both of us had to bale. We did not like to give in, so we stuck to our labour like Britons, but we cast many an anxious glance at the shore to see if it were within swimming distance in case a rotten plank were to cave in.

At last the homeward flight of the herons gave us an excuse for going home too, and we gladly left our leaky boat, with a resolve never to set foot in her again.

Antingham is the very northernmost point of the Broad district, and indeed only connected with it by the canal and the river Ant; and as it is rather out of our beat, we are glad to row back along the narrow stream and seek the wider space of Barton Broad.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MERRY CRUISE ON THE ANT AND THURNE.

WHEN Whitsuntide falls in June it affords a rare opportunity for three or four days' cruising on the Broads, and this chapter contains the log of such a cruise on the Ant and the Thurne, which was a very merry one, because there were three boats in company. There was the Swallow, a 4-ton cutter; the Coya; and the Bee, a 19-foot open centre-board cutter.

The Swallow, with a crew of two, started in the morning from Wroxham Bridge and sailed down the river Bure and up the Ant to Ludham Bridge, which was the trysting-place. The Bee, with her owner, his wife, and a friend, followed from another quarter. The Coya was already waiting there, and the writer, with his wife and a friend, drove from Wroxham station in the afternoon. The road follows the high ground on the edge of the marsh-land, and on our right hand we could see the shining curves of the river and four or five of the Broads sleeping in the sunlight.

All three boats were lying above the bridge, the Swallow and the Bee raising their masts, which had been lowered to get through the bridge. It did not take long to get our baggage on board and to hoist sail, and we started together. The Ant is very narrow and not very deep, and the Swallow frequently touched the mud with her deep, fixed keel. There was a strong wind from the west, and the Swallow and Bee took in reefs. We tore along in too close company, and when the channel twisted to the westward and was too narrow to allow us to tack, three tow-lines were simultaneously taken ashore and the boats towed close on each other's heels until the river again turned northward. Away we went again: first the Bee; twenty yards after, the Swallow; and twenty yards after her the Coya—the wash we made sweeping over the banks. Suddenly the Swallow grounded: there was no room to pass her to windward, and to leeward her 23-foot boom covered all the breadth of the channel.

“Haul in your boom or there'll be a smash,” cried the Coya, coming at the rate of six miles an hour close behind. The main-sheet was got in with great rapidity, and the Coya just managed to slide by without doing or receiving any damage. The Swallow was soon got afloat again, and took up the chase. We passed over Instead shoals, and then we saw a wherry coming, her brown sail towering high in the air. She signalled us to keep to windward of her, which we were only just able to do, as the reach was a “scant” one. To go to leeward would

mean having our mast taken out of us by her great sail and gaff. Then, after having had a sharp sail of four miles, we reached Barton Broad, on which magnificent sheet of water, where the wind raised respectable waves, we caught some heavy puffs while tearing up the lake, and the Coya had to top her boom and lower her peak, while the Swallow carried away her topping-lift.

The chart showed a channel leading northward to two smaller Broads, called Stalham and Sutton Broads, and the Coya led the way up a wide dyke. Then we came to where the dyke divided into two. After a hurried look at the chart, we took the right-hand turn, the Bee following and almost touching us, and the Swallow in difficulties some way behind, with her sail half down. Another division of the dyke, respecting which the chart was silent, so we took the left-hand one, and found that this narrow dyke was all that remained of Stalham Broad, the rest having grown into a wilderness of reeds. We lay to at the end of the dyke near Stalham village, and prepared tea; but the Swallow came not, and though we rowed back for a mile in the jolly, we saw no sign of her. The Coya was made snug for the night, with an awning over the well and two hammocks slung in the little cabin, where the skipper and his wife reposed. The Bees slept at an inn at Stalham, and the two bachelors rigged up an awning over the Bee, and slept thereunder.

We were disturbed many times by the eel-fishers who rowed past in the night, and ceased rowing to gaze at the

boats. The occupants of the Bee asserted that some of those who went past lifted up the awning and peeped at them.

Before breakfast the two Swallows came up in their jolly, and stated that they had got aground again, and thought it better to stay where they were for the night; and that being on the leeward side of the dyke, a wherry's sail had grazed the top of their mast and taken the truck off. They had come in search of us the night before in their jolly, but had taken the wrong turn, which led them on to Sutton Broad, which was simply a shallow reedy lake of no particular interest.

As it was Sunday, we all went dutifully to church except one wicked man, but when we came out the rain was falling fast. We laid the two boats side by side, with an awning over both, and made a comfortable dinner, which actually included a trifle made by one of the ladies. It rained hard and blew hard all the day, and as the wind was straight down the narrow dyke, we had to quant the boats on to Barton Broad (which against the strong wind and the pouring rain was an uncomfortable operation, although we made merry over the difficulties), and with the three boats once more united, we made ourselves happy in spite of adverse circumstances. It blew and rained all day and all night with great violence, and the worst of it was that the queen Bee and her husband had to row two miles back to Stalham to sleep.

The morning broke fine, with a north-west wind. We

amused ourselves by photographing and gathering the silky cotton-grasses with which the marsh was white, until the Bees came back, about the middle of the morning, having had their drenched clothes dried in an oven.

We had a rapid sail back over the Broad and down the Ant to the river Bure, where there was by comparison plenty of width and room. We sailed down the stream in close company until we came to St Benedict's Abbey, where we moored side by side to have dinner. We photographed the ruins of the abbey in a hurry, because a bull took too great an interest in our proceedings, and then we sailed two miles further to the mouth of the Thurne, up which we turned. As the three yachts sailed up this stream almost side by side, the wash was great; and one angler, who was lying on the low bank fast asleep, was swept from heels to head by the wave, and was extremely indignant. Another angler, a clergyman, was sitting on a chair, and on hearing our warning cry, "Mind your feet!" thought we meant to be impertinent, until the water convinced him that our hail was very pertinent.

While the Swallow and the Bee sailed on up to Potter Heigham, the Coya turned up Womack dyke into a small sheet of water called Womack Broad. This once had 25 acres of water; but not many years ago a "hove" or floating island was blown up by the wind and anchored itself in a shallow spot in the middle, and so formed the nucleus of a vegetable growth, which has covered most of

the surface. It is not solid enough now to bear the weight of a man, but in a few years it will be. An old man who lived on the borders of the Broad was very eloquent as to the doings of his father and himself on the fine little Broad, and he sorrowfully and graphically traced the various stages in the contraction of the water-space by the vegetation. A large and picturesque old boat-shed, with a high-roofed barn behind, a cluster of the most old-world kind of habitations in a tangled garden, and worn-out craft and gnarled oak timber for "knees" in front, formed one of the most eloquent "bits" for a painter to be found on the rivers, and we made repeated attempts to photograph it from the unsteady platform of a boat. While we were doing this, the old man got a ladder and climbed on to the thatched roof of the barn, against which the red laden branches of a cherry-tree drooped, and presently he brought us a quantity of the fruit, and hoped that we would send him a copy of the "picture of the old place" to send to his daughter, who had married, and gone to live a long way off.

When the Coya left this secluded and lovely spot, she sailed up with a dying wind to Potter Heigham Bridge, where the others had already arrived, and soon a sociable and lazy "high tea" brought the labour of the day to a close.

In the evening the writer fished and caught some pike, while the others strolled about and gathered heaps of the yellow iris flowers to "live up to," and generally behaved

like unruly children. The Bees found a hive close by the bridge, at the Waterman's Arms.*

The next morning we took the Bee through the bridge, and all of us went on board her up the Hundred Stream, over Heigham Sounds and Whiteslea on to Hickling; and in the afternoon we sailed back all three in a lump, and in the tacking up the Bure we hampered each other dreadfully, as the speed of the boats was so equal that we could not get away from each other. We stopped at the picturesque river-side inn at Horning Ferry for tea, and then the Coya sailed on to the smaller Broad at Salhouse, where among the lilies she dropped her anchor. The other two boats sailed on up to Wroxham, and so finished a cruise, which, in spite of the one wet day, was exceedingly merry and successful, and will, it is hoped, be repeated each Whitsuntide that falls in June.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MARSHES.

THE appearance of the country surrounding the Broad's and along the course of the rivers is very different now from what it was even a century back. Many of the flat green meadows where cattle now graze were swamps and quagmires, sodden with stagnant water, covered with reeds, sedges, and bulrushes, and the homes only of birds and fishes. Instead of being mapped out by straight gleaming dykes, and gay with the brighter grasses and flowers which now grow on the drier soil, there was but a wilderness like that which still lies on the borders of some of the Broad's. Where formerly the foot of the sportsman durst not tread in his pursuit of snipe, the soil is now firm enough to support the heaviest bullock. Drainage has been actively followed wherever it seemed possible, and the result has been very profitable. In the good times of a few years back, which seem to have departed for a season, some of the reclaimed marshes were let on lease for £4 an acre for grazing purposes. The great

extent of this reclaimed land can best be realised by climbing to the top of one of the drainage windmills near Yarmouth, and looking over the level plain which melts away in the distance. The courses of the rivers can be traced by the sails of wherries and the drainage mills, which are situated at the outlet of the main dykes into the rivers. The level of the marsh and the rivers would formerly be the same, but with drainage comes a consolidation of the spongy soil, and a consequent sinking of the level. This sinking has gone to the extent not only of inches but of feet; and of course necessitates that the water should be pumped out of the marsh-drains into the river. Along each bank of the river is an embankment or earth-wall, and at its intersections of the dykes mills are placed, that work turbine-wheels, which in principle are like very narrow paddle-wheels revolving in a trough, into which the water flows from the drain. The floats dash the water up to the higher level, whence it flows into the river. The motive power universally in use was the wind, and the windmills were of every shape and size, from the brick tower to the skeleton wooden erection, painted bright red and blue, and placed at the mouths of the smaller drains. These mills could only work when there was wind enough; and on a blowy day they all twirled madly around in a rather comical fashion when many were in sight at once. In windless weather the water could not be got off the marshes; and now the windmills are being superseded by fine steam-mills, which drain

larger "levels," and will take the water off very rapidly. The windmills are often wrecked by wind-storms ; and we once saw a fine wooden tower-mill blown clean over during a heavy gale.

The marshes where drained appear to have been called "dams," perhaps because the water was dammed back from them. A person writing in the year 1800, speaks of the "tame and meadowed flats, here called dams, between Yarmouth and Norwich, producing turf, peat, furze, flag, and sedge."

The drainage of the fen-lands has greatly changed the character of its fauna, marsh-loving species decreasing in numbers, and in some cases disappearing altogether, their place being taken by habitants of wood and meadow. The climate also has much altered for the better, and the people living here are not so likely to be seized by "*the Bailiff of Marshland*"—the ague—as of yore. Indeed, as far as we can learn, ague has almost ceased to exist as a complaint now ; and stranger than all, there is a striking freedom from rheumatism, considering that there is water, and therefore damp, everywhere. The reason no doubt is, that really stagnant water is rarely to be found. There is everywhere a constant though slow circulation, which keeps the pools and dykes sweet and comparatively pure. The great drawback in the marsh-land is the lack of palatable water to drink. Springs are few and far between, and the Broad, or river water, where it is not salt, is used for drinking purposes. Late one night we

had sailed as far as Stokesby on our way to Yarmouth, and were compelled to moor for lack of wind. When the stove was lit, it was discovered that there was no fresh water for the kettle, so we rowed up to a house, and not daring to land, because of two uncompromising dogs, aroused the family by our shouts. "Will you please let us have some fresh water?" "We ain't none, 'cept what we gets out of the river at ebb tide." As it was then low tide, we used the river water for our tea. It had a decidedly brackish taste; and during the night we were racked with thirst, arising from its use, and arrived at Yarmouth in the morning with consequent headaches. We have many times drunk the water of the Broads, but however limpid it looks, it tastes like rain-water; and we cannot forget the mud at the bottom, which, if stirred up in shallow places by the boat's keel, often emits a most disagreeable smell.

Between the river-wall and the water is always a strip of land of a "betwixt and between" character—half water, half land, covered with reeds and rushes, and covered too by the water at high tide. This is the "rond" or "rand," and is frequently so soft that large pieces of it are broken away by the swell of the steamers, or the force of wind and tide. The rond islands go floating up and down until they find a haven in some dyke or bay, and there take fresh root. One moonlight night we were sailing up the Yare by Cantley, and could not make out what it was that stretched across the river in front of

us. It turned out to be two floating islands, which, with the exception of a narrow passage between them, covered the whole width of the river. During last summer no less than an acre and a half of rond is computed to have been torn off the banks of the Yare and sent afloat by the swell from steamers. With agencies such as this, it is no wonder that the channel of the river widens, and, at the same time, becomes shallower. In some parts of the river you cannot approach the shore by 30 feet. The level of the spongy rond is several feet above the drained marsh, the other side of the wall.

The marsh scenery has its attributes of beauty. Like the sky, it has space and colour, and the shades of its vegetation are akin to the clouds above it, changing in form and brightness. On an April day, for instance, when sunshine and shower, dark cloud and white cloud, pass rapidly over it, the atmospheric effects between the plain and the sky are wonderful. There are times, in dull and gloomy weather, when all beauty departs from it, except the one sense of space ; but such times are rare.

There are but few trees in the lower marshes—here and there a willow, or a row of tall poplars, may be seen, or a group of low trees around a cottage ; but in the upper marshes, low copses, locally called “carrs,” are numerous. The cottages of the marshmen and labourers, scattered here and there, are mossy and stained with mildew, and look terribly damp and unwholesome.

The dykes are kept clear, and the channel of the river

deepened, by "dydling," a dirty and laborious occupation. At the end of a long pole is a metal scoop, in the shape of a ring, with a network or coarse canvas bag, like a landing-net in shape, attached. This is plunged into the river, and scraped along the bottom to the side, where it is lifted out, and the black, semi-liquid mud poured on to the rond. Long black lines of this border the rivers in many places, and it is some time before it consolidates, and coarse vegetation grows on it. It is full of the shells of the fresh-water mussel, which is very numerous.

A large portion of the marsh-ground round the Broads and along the rivers and dykes is covered with a thick growth of reeds. These graceful plants are not by any means wasted. They are yearly cut and gathered, and are used for thatching, making fences, supporting plaster-work, and other things, and are a really valuable crop. The reed-border of Whittlesea Mere, before it was drained, produced annually about 1000 bundles of reeds, valued at £1 apiece; and the price of reeds in Norfolk is at all times high.

The reeds from the neighbourhood of Horning Ferry are supposed to be especially valuable, and people send for them from long distances. Indeed the supply is not equal to the demand. During this reed-harvest the men employed earn good wages, and forsake their other occupations. The stacks of reeds on the river-banks often form picturesque objects in the foreground of the land-

scape. After the reeds are cut, the water-margins look bare and shorn of much of their beauty.

The coarse sedges and grasses which grow in other parts of the marsh are cut and made into hay—not for food, but for litter; and the barges which carry the hay from one point to another are often completely hidden under the fragrant load.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE UPPER YARE.

THROUGH a sky of somewhat misty blue, the sun shines upon the glowing colours of an October landscape. From the grey stone bridge on which we stand, we see an old-fashioned village, built with a delightful irregularity, the houses with strange and fantastically curved gables. Through the village runs the broad highroad from the city, and along it comes a gaily painted and ponderous waggon drawn by four horses. A little apart from the village, and on the banks of the river, stands the hoary church, with its thatched roof, while around it tall elms are sending down a slow and noiseless shower of leaves, which lie on the gravestones, unmoved by any breath of wind. The river divides two parishes, and on the other bank is another church with the like glamour of age, and the like environment of wide-spreading trees. Just above is the mill, which the patient river has worked for more than one century. Like all Norfolk mills, it is an "under-shot" one, the water impinging upon the lower floats of

the wheels, instead of falling upon the upper ones, as is the manner of districts where the river has greater fall. From a black archway below the mill the water bursts and rushes gleefully—having done its work—and plays over a wide expanse of yellow gravel before it gathers for its plunge through the arches of the bridge, and its rest in the deep, dark, slumberous pool below. The river is small, being the upper part of the Yare, but it has deep holes here and there, and in these holes there are pike—not many nor of large size, but sufficient to give an object to an autumn ramble; so we have brought our rod and tackle, and some live roach in a can.

We will make our first try in the pool below the mill, and as we take our stand at its head, a black-and-white cat runs up in a friendly way, and seats herself upon the bait-can. She is fond of fish, and speculates upon having those which have been used up given to her; so she will follow us patiently all day if we keep within two meadows' breadth of the mill. There is just one spot on the edge of the rushing current, and out of its force, where a small jack always lies, and we guide our live bait and its supporting float so that it whirls round in the eddy over the lair. There is a flash of yellow light in the water, and the float is drawn beneath. We strike, and pussy becomes quite elated as we play the jack and lead him to a shallow spot. She marches up and down the bank, with her tail straight up in the air, and finally, as we stoop down to lift the fish out, she jumps on our shoulders. The jack is only

about 3 lb. in weight, but we do not return it, for it knows how to worry the miller's young ducks.

Our next try shall be in the pool below the bridge. It is difficult to fish it except from the bridge, as it is surrounded by trees; but if we should hook a fish from the bridge, how are we to land it? Doubtless we shall find some way to do so if the contingency arises; so we adopt the plan that gives least trouble at the outset, and are punished afterwards for our laziness. As we pay the line out, and the float drifts down the pool in company with a host of red and brown leaves, we see the unfortunate roach hurrying towards the surface, and in its wake comes a green and yellow body, with cruel eyes and wide-open jaws, and then fish and float disappear in the depths below. We strike, and the strike is followed by a furious plunge at the other end of the line, that nearly takes the rod out of our hand. Up and down the pool the pike swims for about five minutes, and then makes a rush to the surface, where he flounders wildly about. This manœuvre does not succeed in freeing him, as often is the case, and he once more dives below. Verily he is a beauty, and may be any weight from 8 to 14 lb. By this time there are many spectators. A carter has stopped his cart on the crown of the bridge, and is offering excited and incoherent advice. A gentleman's carriage is unable to pass, and its occupants patiently await the *finale*. On the other side is a carrier's cart, with its load of countryfolk. Some men come out of the mill to see the fun, and the idlers

gather from the village. This makes it very nervous work for us, and we are glad when the pike turns on his side and acknowledges himself vanquished. We sit astride the high stone parapet, and lead the fish to a shallow, where the carter, who has run around through a gap, is waiting for it. Mistrusting his skill in such matters, we earnestly implore him not to touch the line, but to seize the fish by the gills. As soon, however, as it comes within his reach, he makes an excited pluck at the line, and actually jerks the hooks out of their hold, and the pike slowly subsides back into the depths. We should strongly like to kick the carter after him; but he is a big, powerful fellow, and might object, so we preserve a cutting silence, even when we discover that the bait-can has been kicked over, and that the baits are lying dead on the road.

After this we take to our spinning-tackle, and bait it with the tail of an eel salted—a most wonderful bait if the water is clear, and one which will last all day. With this we take another small pike just below the church, and stop for a while to listen to the notes of the organ, upon which some one is practising. In the next meadow there are a number of red and white cows—very pleasing objects in the landscape—but is that one a bull? Yes, it is; but is he vicious? We fish slowly down, carefully covering every yard of water, but with an eye upon the bull, nevertheless; for a fence is an easy thing to negotiate with a bull in pursuit of one, but a deep river and wide dykes are not so pleasant. However, he takes no notice of us,

although the cows—inquisitive creatures that they are—follow us, and form in a half-circle behind us whenever we stop.

The river slackens still more in its speed, and widens into large pools, which look the very haunts of pike; yet they do not seem to be on the feed to-day. Look at that broad deep pool where the lustrous leaves move round with the sluggish eddy. There must be a monster there if one could only fish it. At the top a beech-tree stretches one long branch right across, and the branchlets, with their load of red-gold leaves, trail on the stream. All around the pool there are trees and bushes, and the gorgeous colouring above is mirrored in the water below. The only ripple is that made by a water-hen swimming across its lower end, and the only sound is the rustle of the aspen leaves, which must be dreaming of a breeze, so merrily do they dance—their last dance ere they join their fellows floating with the stream. It is a fairy picture, but an unfishable pool.

Now we pass through an alder-carr, startling a wild-duck from the sedges and a pheasant from the bushes. Along the water's edge is a tall fringe of reeds, over which we cannot reach; so we stroll along and watch the arrowy flight of a kingfisher, the laboured rise of a heron, the nodding water-hens and bright-eyed water-rats, until we come to where the water is more open. And here is a picture. Curving along the edge of a wide meadow is the river, now forming a mill-pool. On its outer bank is a

belt of wood, consisting of many kinds of trees, each with its own lovely tint of red, yellow, green, and brown. Through this wood comes the level sunshine, and as the steady rain of leaves passes through each shaft of light, it is transformed into drops of falling fire. In the radiant water the silver dace are rising freely at the gnats which touch its surface, out of the films of insects which here and there hover over it, or rise in quivering columns to the sky. Across the meadow is the many-gabled mill, its windows aflame with the reflected light, and around all is the ever-present circle of trees which bounds a Norfolk landscape.

We pass rapidly along, with a cast here and there only, for the afternoon is waning. We land two pike, each about three pounds in weight, and then make for two pools below the mills, in one of which we hope to get a larger one. We nevertheless stop for a chat with the miller, whose clothes are white with the flour. He tells us that he has been down the stream in his boat, and that he has not seen any fish moving. But this is nothing more than we expect, for we seldom have the good fortune to go a-fishing when the pike *are* on the move.

At the first of the two pools we make for, the margin is very soft and wet, and we step daintily on the shaking tussocks, and nearly step on to a skulking water-hen, which rises in such a flurry that it startles us into a false step, and we flounder up to our knees in the mud. As our bait traverses the deep back-water, we feel the indescribable

thrill, or rather shock, which proceeds from a decided run, and a 3-pound pike fights as gamely as a 10-pounder. In fact, these little fish show more fight and energy than the larger ones. So here we have five fish as like as peas, and clearly the average size for this portion of the stream. Let us hurry on for the final and best pool while daylight lasts ; but here is rather a formidable dyke which has to be jumped. We fling rod, basket, coat and hat across first of all, and then our heart fails us ; it is such a very broad and deep dyke. We walk up and down, but fail to find a narrower place, and it is clear we must follow our *impedimenta*. We therefore harden our hearts, and just manage to clear it.

Here is the pool, large and deep, but not a bit of water is visible for the dense masses of leaves which cover it in a layer several inches in depth. All the dead leaves that have floated down seem to have been arrested by this eddy. As they slowly circle round, however, they part, and little lanes of water become visible. Seizing the exact moment when there is a clear track right across, we cast our bait and work it in with every sense agog with expectation. Ah, there is a welcome check ! We strike hard, and find that we are fast in a good-sized fish. Up and down, round and round he goes, while the line becomes heavily clogged with the leaves ; and then he turns suddenly on his side, and is towed on to a shallow below and landed like a log, giving not half the play the smaller ones did, although he will turn the scale at 7 lb. ...

As the gloaming deepens we reach the crest of a hill, and, looking back, see no sign of the river, for the mist has risen and blotted it out with its chilly curtain. But nothing can blot out the memory of the pleasant, quiet days spent in angling in Norfolk streams.

CHAPTER XVII.

NORWICH TO COLDHAM HALL.

THE river Wensum, above Norwich, is popularly known as the Back River, in contradistinction to the stream below, which is called the Front River. Except that it is a larger stream than the Upper Yare, it presents the same characteristics,—a quiet English stream, spanned by mills, and flowing through much park and woodland scenery. Formerly the river seems to have preserved its name of Wensum or Wenson, until it joined the Waveney at the top of Breydon Water; and in old deeds, lands lying by Cantley and Reedham were described as bounded by the Wensum. For many generations past, however, the river has been known as the Yare, from its junction with the true river of that ilk just below Norwich.

The navigation is stopped by the “New Mills,” which is an ancient structure spanning the river where it enters the city, though one of the abbots of St Benedict’s once sued the citizens of Norwich for an interference with his right of water-way up to his possessions higher up the river, but his claim was adjudged to be unfounded.

The river winds through the city with a narrow channel, and, when there is much flood-water, with so swift a current that a wherry has great difficulty in stemming it, although urged up by the quants of half-a-dozen men. There is barely room for wherries to pass each other in places.

The swirling pool below the New Mills is the resort of smelters, who, when the smelts come up to spawn and are stopped by the mills, catch them with large cast-nets, frequently fishing at night by the light of torches. The smelt-fishing has, however, sadly deteriorated, owing, it is believed, to the pollution of the stream which unfortunately goes on—a pollution which kills the lamperns in large numbers, and at times even the eels. Many persons say that they can detect the faint cucumber smell peculiar to the smelt from the banks, when the smelts are up, which is surely a stretch of imagination.

After squeezing through the city, the river emerges on the east, and skirts the low ground on which the cathedral is built, and the ruin of the Watergate, known as Pull's Ferry, which has been painted and photographed thousands of times; and here we will ask the reader to accompany us on board a small steam-launch for an evening's run down the river. And although, as a sailorman, we frequently express our abhorrence of "steam-kettles," yet we must acknowledge that it is a very convenient method of propulsion in the upper reaches of the river, where the high banks and trees keep the wind off. The wind usually

dies away towards evening in the summer, and an excursion after five o'clock is impossible with a sailing craft, but highly enjoyable with a steamer. As we go at quarter speed past the staithes and wharves, we catch glimpses on our right of the quaint houses which abound in the street which runs parallel with the river for nearly a mile. If, as we pass between two ruined towers, between which a boom was once swung to control the passage of vessels, we look up to the right, we shall see a well-preserved portion of the city wall climbing the declivity and terminating in a large tower on the summit. We thread our way carefully through a block of wherries and "billy-boys"; and when we are below the gigantic mustard-works, whence boxes go all over the world, we quicken our pace and run swiftly past the confluence of the Yare, at the spot known as Trowse Hythe, and presently leave the navigation channel and enter a reach of the old river, which is crossed by two railway bridges. This is Thorpe reach, and it curves past an ancient mansion, many smaller houses with beautiful gardens, and the pretty village of Thorpe. It is a reach which is not excelled for variety of attraction and warmth of colour by any reach on the Thames. The inn at the lower end of it, kept by Hart, is a place of popular resort on summer evenings. Close as this is to the city, the fishing is at times good. In the winter of 1879 there was a large aggregation of pike in this reach, either from the fact that high tides had driven the fish up, or because the reach had been dydled out, and the fish sought the

clear hard bottom. Over 500 pike were caught in a very short time—50 from one spot a few yards square—and recently very good catches have been made of pike running up to 18 lb. in weight, and bream up to 5 lb. This, it should be noted, is within two miles of the city.

Rejoining the channel, which turns sharply to the right, we see a picturesque cottage, straw-thatched, large-eaved, embowered in trees, clad in creepers, and with a broad dyke in front. This is Whitlingham White House; and from here for about a mile the ground on the right bank is high and wooded, with a ruined church crowning the eminence, and the slopes broken with the old workings of marl-pits. A little lower, but on the left bank, is a hill known as Postwick, which, as it is within an easy row of the city, has always pleasure-craft drawn up at its base, and under the shade of its trees. We have frequently to slacken speed in these upper reaches, for the occupants of the rowing-boats have no idea of any rule of the road, and meander helplessly across our bows. We have to make way for all wherries and sailing-craft too, and in one reach we meet seven wherries tacking across and across, so that some little skill is required to clear them all. If it were not for this, however, steering a steam-launch would be terribly monotonous. Another mile brings us to Bramerton, where the Wood's End public-house and gardens are the goal of the usual evening's row. Once away from the lee of the hill here (which is a sweetly pretty spot), the high lands fall back on either side, and the marshes gain

in width, and present the characteristics of the Broad district.

We have got rid of the rowing-boats, and appreciate the greater breadth and freedom of the river. The channel is very sinuous, and the shoals are frequent, and extend a long way from the banks on either side; and without an intimate knowledge of the river, a sailing-boat would be constantly aground. At Surlingham Ferry, about six miles from Norwich, we notice the type of ferry in use on these rivers. It is a large raft worked across from side to side by a windlass and chain, the latter dropping to the bottom when not in use. It is rather striking to notice how still a horse remains when being ferried across even for the first time, although his eyes and ears show that he is keenly taking in his novel position. The ferry-house, which is a comfortable inn, stands low, and in flood-time is surrounded by water. On a recent occasion the water came up in the night and flooded the back premises and the floor of the fowl-house. In the morning fourteen fowls flew down from their roosting perches, and were all drowned in the water beneath, where they were found by the tenant.

Presently we passed a boat in which was a gentleman fishing. One of our lady passengers exclaimed, "Why, there is my husband! He said he was going to work late at the office, and here he is fishing!" We gave the deceitful husband a cheer, in anticipation of the curtain lecture he would afterwards receive, and left him abashed.

Our bourne is Coldham Hall, where, in a comfortable house-boat, we have a luxurious tea, and steam back in the quiet moonlight, having had a very uneventful but pleasant evening, the log of which is only narrated to excuse a brief description of a part of the river which is lovely in the extreme, but has no greater interest than the charm which the happy combination of wood and water give it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SURLINGHAM BROAD.

DRIVING out of Norwich one bright December morning, with a blue frosty sky above and a hard frosty road beneath, on which the sun was making moist patches here and there, our hearts were heavy. We were bent on sport, and we had our bait-can full of live roach and our other implements ready, and yet we felt inclined to return. This uneasiness was the result of a tender conscience, and our conscience was aroused by the fact that it was not a legitimate form of sport which we sought. In fine, we were going to set liggers on Surlingham Broad. Now liggers—or trimmers, as they are called in other parts of England—were always accounted perfectly proper and sportsmanlike things in Norfolk until recently, when there has been a kind of angling revival, and people have put aside their old sins, and put on garments which are very virtuous indeed. The time we refer to was, however, before this feeling had become very intense, and many Norfolk piscators were not ashamed to go liggering openly,

and talk of it afterwards. That day at Surlingham, however, was the first and the last time we (the author we) ever did such a dreadful deed. In fact we gained no great encouragement to repeat it, for not a pike did we get the livelong day. The water was crystal-clear ; not a breath of wind rippled its polished surface, and the rustle of a reed far away was a striking sound. We set a score of trimmers, and we used our rods as well, and not the sign of a pike was there. Where do they go to on such days ? While the short daylight lasted, we could see every weed in the shallow water, and not a fish was visible. The windmill on the bank (since overthrown by a gale) was motionless ; the reeds were motionless also, save now and then when a rebellious one emphasised the stillness by its rustling.

We went to the marshman's cottage and cooked our own dinner of eggs and bacon ; and this was the most exciting incident of the day. Still, curiously enough, although the day was then voted extremely slow, now when the discomfort of it is forgotten, the calm quiet beauty of it is retained, and gives a sense of pleasure. Indeed we fully believe that it is not always those days which are most keenly enjoyed at the time that are the most recreative, in the true sense of the term, but those days on which, from some hardly explainable cause, the enjoyment, quiet at first, grows with recollection, like the memory of some sweet voice ; the gracious freshness of vegetation and the scent of the earth after rain attracting our attention in some time of trouble, and often dwelt upon afterwards.

Surlingham Broad is situated almost within a curve of the river, and dykes at either end connect the latter with the Broad. At high tide there is sufficient water for light wherries to sail across, and so save a considerable detour; and in past years the channel was always considered a navigable one. In the survey or plan on which the navigation scheme of 1827 was founded, an enlargement of this channel is shown, and it was the intention to make this the main channel. It would have been a great convenience to the navigation if this had been carried out.

The Broad is very shallow, and is fast growing up. The extent of open water is comparatively small, while on the part farthest from the river there is a labyrinth of channels through the tall reeds and bushes, and sequestered little pools, which are natural harbours of bird-life, and are often invaded by the collector.

The growth of weeds and consequent choking up of the Broad, is accelerated by the extent to which the ebb tides now leave the shoaler places bare—as the vegetation takes firmer root and grows more luxuriantly for this partial drying out. In times past, the ebb and flow were not so marked as they are now; but owing to the deepening of Yarmouth harbour, and the consequent greater freedom of entrance and exit of sea-water, the tides are increasing in rise and fall, and in rapidity of flow and reflow. We have seen Surlingham Broad in the morning a goodly lake, and in the afternoon a mass of steaming weeds with but little clear water visible. On the occasion of an extremely low

tide in January 1883, the water left the Broad to such an extent that a party of gentlemen in a boat could not get ashore, and had at last to wade through a dangerous depth of mud.

In the bright spring weather, which seems to be a thing of the past, this Broad used for a few days to present a sight worth seeing. At the "rouding" or spawning time of the bream and the roach, they crowded on to the Broad from the river in such immense numbers that the water was a moving mass of fish, so that it seemed as if a boat could hardly be rowed among them. On a fine hot day the backs of the huge bream could be seen breaking the surface in every direction; and in the stillness of the night, the splashings and suckings and wallowings, the shakings of the reeds as the monsters rolled through them, and the cries and twitterings of the reed-sparrows, were striking in the extreme. One moonlight night a man, gazing on the scene, remarked—and the remark proves that he had not a poetical temperament—that "the Broad reminded him of a Stilton cheese all alive with maggots." For the last few years the rouding-time has not been so remarkable, and the fish have not appeared in such numbers. The reason for this is not quite apparent to us, unless it is that the colder seasons have induced the fish to spawn in deeper water.

From its proximity to Norwich, Surlingham Broad is frequently visited by naturalists, who sometimes find a quiet night spent in listening and observing among its sheltering

reeds to be well spent indeed. Mr Stevenson, in his 'Birds of Norfolk,' gives a very appreciative and interesting account of such a night. We heard a story of a naturalist and a marshman who got so puzzled and lost in a thick mist while rowing about one night, that they gave up trying to find their way home, and lay down in the bottom of the boat and went to sleep. In the morning they were aroused by the sound of oars and a woman's voice crying, "Oh, where is my dear Bill? oh, is he drowned? Oh, Bill, Bill, come back to your poor lone widder! Oh, there you are, you rascal! Just you come home, and won't I comb your head for you—a-putting me to all this trouble," &c. ; and Bill *did* get his head "combed."

In the winter frosts the dyke leading out of the Broad having a tolerably rapid current, does not freeze soon, and the bits of open water are the resorts of numbers of dabchicks. A friend of ours once had a capital day's sport on this dyke shooting at the dabchicks, which dived and popped up behind him or at his very feet, but always where he did not expect them. He did not kill any, but he had the exercise and the shooting, and by way of excitement he got into a soft place up to his armpits.

The marshes at Surlingham and on the opposite side of the river below Coldham Hall, are among the best snipe-grounds in the country; and on any spring or summer day you may hear the bleating of the snipe and see the birds in two or three directions at once, and at the same time hear the whistle of the redshank.

Just below the Broad and on the river-side is a picturesque group of sheds. In one of these the Swan was built, and there at this moment she lies high and dry, dreaming perhaps, like her master, of her exploits last season, and her intentions for the season to come; for what yachtsman dare deny that his yacht is a thing of life and feeling?

This is Coldham Hall, and after fishing-matches on the river, the green in front of the inn presents a curious spectacle. A huge pair of scales, which could weigh a jockey, is hard at work weighing the catches, and the heaps of fish are laid out in a row for admiration and discussion. The fate of kingdoms does not excite the interest which accompanies the arrival of each boat at the close of the hard-fought day; and the faces of the "sons of toil" who thus seek their recreation are proud with satisfaction or moody with discontent, according to the contents of the "frails," or straw baskets which hold the catches. The wit of East Anglia is ready and keen, and in the main good-humoured, and the scene is amusing enough and picturesque.

These fishing-matches are carefully arranged and well attended. There are many angling clubs in Norwich, supported by all classes, and the love of fishing is very strong among the artisan classes. Well it is that it is so; and a day now and then on the pleasant waters will make up in some degree for close and crowded dwellings and unhealthy employments.

Stations are chosen and marked by numbers stuck on rods. Lots are cast, and two persons go in each boat. The boats are let out at the cheapest of rates—a shilling a-day (it used to be sixpence)—and the train fares on the line from Norwich to Yarmouth are very low, so that the expenses are slight. Every 80 yards or so a boat is moored, and its occupants fish diligently up to a time fixed beforehand, and then row to the hostelry, hoping that some one of the miscellaneous prizes may fall to their lot.

Below Coldham Hall the river is wide, but very shallow on either side. As rivers usually do, it has widened its channel rather than deepened it. For the next mile or so there is no feature of special interest beyond wherries, yachts, herons, and fishing-boats (of which the reader will, we fear, be heartily sick ere he finishes this book), until we come to Rockland Broad.

It should be stated that there are other small pieces of water fast growing up hard by, but none worth description as a Broad.



ROCKLAND BROAD.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROCKLAND BROAD.

WHEN we were boys it was the height of our ambition to live like backwoodsmen upon the fruits of our gun (catapult) and rod, and many a good meal we have spurned in favour of half-burned sparrows, cooked over a wood-fire in the back garden, and potatoes roasted in the ashes. At that time we were not, fortunately for ourselves and our parents, aware that there were many people who gained their living in that way in England, nor did we know the district where they chiefly flourish—that of the Norfolk Broads.

In this happy land the habitations of man are few and far between; the rivers are the highways, and the men who traverse them live on them and are true “water-abiders”; and unsophisticated nature reigns in solitude and wildness. The wide, flat plain aglow with the sunlight, or losing its flower-colours in the driving mist; the lakes doubling the reeds and iris flowers in the placid mirrors of their calm, or sweeping them down with the

white waves of their storm ; the splash of fish and cry of fowl in the stillness of nights ; and the white and yellow of lilies and scent-of meadow-sweet on hot summer days, —are but small items in the wild and glorious whole. Those, too, who use these waters for pleasure, are in the main of the stamp of men whom old Izaak Walton claims to be true anglers ; and those who gain their living upon them are men of an infinite variety of water-side anecdote—stories of fowl and of fish, of Wills-o'-the-wisp and ghostly lights and forms on misty nights.

The water-abiders are of two kinds—those who navigate the numerous wherries, and those who live entirely by fowling, fishing, and netting. The latter class are decreasing in numbers, as the riparian owners naturally object to their presence, and close their Broads to them as far as possible. Still they are many in number—the aborigines of the soil, or water rather ; and they live lonely lives in waterside-cottages, or in boats with huts built on them, and looking extremely like Noah's arks, which one sees half hidden in some dyke off the water where the reeds meet overhead. Their employment has been much interfered with by the Norfolk and Suffolk Fisheries Act, which rightly enacts that nets of a certain mesh shall not be used, but which, neither reasonably nor intelligibly, has put down the long eel-lines which were formerly used. These rivers, the Yare, the Waveney, and the Bure, swarm with eels, and every opportunity should be afforded to poor folk to obtain and sell such an important supply of

food. Formerly eel-lines, with a thousand hooks strung on at intervals, and baited with small fish, used to be set, and great store of eels taken thereby ; but alas ! pike were occasionally taken on them, and anglers took fright, and for the sake of a few pike more or less in the course of a year, aided to destroy the honest livelihood of many men.

There is one happy hunting-ground still left to these water-abiders, and that is Rockland Broad. This is a shallow sheet of water, about sixty acres in extent, communicating by half-a-dozen dykes with the river Yare. One of the dykes is navigable for craft drawing not more than three feet of water, and it is nearly a mile long. As the tide ebbs each day, a strong current of fresh water flows off the Broad, so that wherry-men sail their craft close to the mouth of the dyke to get a bucket of drinking-water as they pass. As you row or sail down the dyke, you will notice how clear the water is, and how it swarms with small fish, which dart back as your boat reaches them. The dyke is about 25 feet wide, and on either side is a border of reeds, low bushes, and dwarf trees, which completely shuts you off from the outer world. You are now in the haunt of heron and fowl, and the silence is only broken by the bleating of snipes in the clear air above you. And now you enter the Broad, and drop your anchor overboard in three feet of clear water. There is a bubbling up of mud as the splash subsides, and when this clears away no anchor is visible. The rope is seen entering the mud, but the anchor has sunk out of

sight. The mud is so soft and so deep, that you may push a long pole down and down without meeting with much resistance. One day, while watching some fish swimming about, we were struck with the multitudes of tracks in the soft yellow mud; grooves, about three-quarters of an inch wide, scrawled about like the markings on a yellow-hammer's eggs. A closer scrutiny revealed the cause to be water-snails, of which there were great numbers crawling slowly about.

It is only of the width of a channel across the Broad, and a small patch in the middle, that the water is so deep as three feet. Over the rest of the Broad it is much shallower, and much choked up by weeds and water-plants of many kinds, while great clumps of reeds grow out of the water here and there. When the water is low in the river, the masses of weeds show very prominently, but not so much so as at Surlingham Broad, higher up the river, where, at low tide, there is little but weeds to be seen.

Rockland Broad stands upon copyhold ground; and the tenants of the manor have a joint right of fishing with the lord, but must not sell their fish. Happily, however, for the persons who live by and on the Broad, it is worth no one's while to enforce the latter restriction, and the fish that are caught are freely sold.

It is time, however, that we noticed the chief feature of the Broad, as far as poor humanity is concerned. There is a floating palace, and there are its king and its queen. True, the palace is but a large old sea-boat, with a hut

built up in the centre third of it, and roofed with planks and tarred felt; but within, all is neat and snug, and spacious enough for the wants of its occupants. And he who sits mending his nets is more free than any monarch. His gun and his nets bring him enough for his needs, his house is his own, his time is his own, he calls no man master, and he pays neither rent nor taxes. What more would you have? His wife is cleaning her crockery, and it is evident that she knows not the need or worry of a servant. Verily, the sobriety of advancing years and the cares of paternity do not prevent me from indulging in a dream of how free and idyllic such a life would be if one could take to it, together with an educated love of nature, a stomach for dirty work—such as hauling in that long eel-net, which is now hung out to dry along the top of the boat. Between a couple of poles on the rond (which is very soft and wet) a casting-net is drying in the wind. Alongside the larger craft is a gunning punt, with a couple of single-barrelled guns lying ready loaded in it. A few yards away is a group of floating boxes or trunks, perforated with holes, in which the eels, tench, pike, and other fish are kept alive until there are sufficient to send to Billingsgate.

The whole establishment is moored in a little reedy bay close by the mouth of the dyke.

Presently the man looks up. His keen eye has detected something moving at the far side of the lake. He gets into his punt, and sculls it with one oar worked in a side

rowlock in a singular and rather inexplicable way, with great rapidity, and noiselessly. Skirting the reeds, and keeping as much as possible within the shelter of the straggling fringe of them which has advanced beyond the main body, he nears the spot where he has marked his quarry. The sun gleams on the barrel of his gun, there is a puff of white smoke, and the report comes loudly over the water, and he has picked up a coot, with which he returns to his hut. He is like a human spider. The Broad is his web; and when anything eatable touches it, he sallies out of his cell bent on destruction. Day and night he follows his pursuit; and though there are two or three others of his kind on the Broad, yet it is naturally a place so favourable in all its conditions to bird-life, that he says there is no diminution of fish or fowl attributable to his pursuits. Indeed I take it that two or three amateur sportsmen spending a day on the water would, by their noise and racket about, do far more to frighten fowl away than he with all his slaughter; for he goes to work so unobtrusively, that only the fowl and fish which are killed find out how dangerous he is—(this last phrase sounds rather Irish, but let it pass).

His pursuits vary a little with the seasons, and this is the course of them. In the spring, when netting for roach and bream is forbidden, he keeps a good look-out for rare birds' nests and eggs, which find a ready sale among the many collectors in Norfolk. Perchance he finds some nests of the bearded tit, with their delicate little

eggs, or he notes the nests of the heron, of which there are several scattered colonies about the Broads, and one small heronry close by, at Surlingham. If he does not take the eggs, he waits until the young birds are nearly able to fly, and then secures them alive. Occasionally, too, he shoots an otter, which are plentiful enough on the Broads, making their "hovers" in a beaver-like nest among the reeds. In the summer he goes eel picking or spearing, or bobbing for eels at night with a ball of worms strung on worsted, by which means he takes large quantities. Then, when the tench sun themselves in the shallow water on hot still days, he "tickles" them, absolutely lifting them out of the water with his hands. The silly fish simply hide their heads in the weeds when they are disturbed, and, ostrich-like, imagine they are safe. With the 1st of August the wild-fowl season opens, and then for a day or two Rockland Broad becomes populous with visitors. Before midnight on the last day of July, gentle and simple, professional and amateur, come in boats and take up their position, waiting patiently until the dawn brings flight-time, when some lucky ones will get seven or eight ducks before the flight is over. After that, the coots and water-hens find the day an unlucky one for them. The whizzing of shot about the Broad makes a nervous man feel uncomfortable. After the opening of the season, however, the professional has it pretty much his own way. In October the eels begin to move towards the estuary, and the eel-net is set across the dyke to catch them in its long "poke" as

they pour off the Broad. When not in use, the poke is stretched out to dry on the top of the boat.

Eels fetch from 9s. to 14s. per stone at Billingsgate, and thither nearly all his eels are sent. On the Bure as many as 28 stone weight of eels are taken in a night, and the profits of the eel season are sufficient to keep the eel-man the rest of the year. What an opening there is for a lucrative industry if properly carried out ! All this wealth of food goes down to the estuary or to the sea, and, according to the best authorities, none of it comes back ; so that, unless it is stopped by eel-nets, it is wasted. There are no eel-nets on the Yare above Reedham ; but if half-a-dozen were set up under the auspices of a company with plenty of capital, a very good thing might be made of it. I do not think that the anglers would like it ; but though I am an angler myself, and would encourage angling as far as I could, yet I do not think it should stand in the way of such an important industry and welcome supply of food as might be made so readily available. I recollect being at Coldham Hall one June morning, and seeing two men bring in 16 lb. of eels which they had speared before breakfast ; yet this was not considered a large catch. One of the eels was 3 lb. in weight. The men skinned the eels while they were alive. The detached heads gaped several times, and the flayed and disembowelled bodies gave convulsive struggles. If ever I take to eel-fishing for a livelihood, I shall sell them alive, and not attempt to prepare them for the pot. Eels fetch sixpence per pound at the water-side.

Eel-picking is an art in which some men attain considerable skill. They move gently along in their boats until they see the "blowing" of an eel, as the bubbles issuing from the mud are termed, and then they strike where the bubbles come from. They can distinguish between the blowing of a large or small eel, and tell both from the blowing of a tench. They do not often strike at random. A still fine day, during hot weather, is the most suitable time for this sort of work. On such days the wherry-men seize the opportunity when their vessel nears the bank to plunge the spears into the mud, and so get a good many eels. The strokes of the spear are called "jowles." Sometimes an eel-picking match takes place on the Broad, between two rival champions, under conditions such as the following: The match to be finished in two hours; each man to have thirty jowles, each time calling out, "Here's a go!" first lifting the spear in the air to show that it is clear of eels, then making one stroke, and then lifting the spear clean out of the water. The stakes are a sovereign a-side, and the match to be decided by numbers, not weight. Each picker has in his boat a mate of his rival's to see fair-play, and a boat with two referees in it accompanies the match.

Hanging up to dry by the eel-hut, you will see numerous bundles of reeds, each the size of a rolling-pin, and tightly and neatly tied up. These are the Broadman's "liggers," or trimmers, which he sets for pike all over

the Broad. The line is rolled round the ligger with a foot or two free, and the double hook is baited with a roach. These are often set in water not a foot deep, and really do not seem to do much harm to angling. The pike are too numerous at present, and hence are very small. A friend of the writer's caught thirty with a spoon-bait one day in the river close by, nineteen of which had to be put back again. The liggering on Rockland, therefore, does not interfere with the pike-fishing in the river. There is too great a craze in Norfolk just now for preserving. The consequence is, that the rivers are over-stocked; and the fish run short of food, and are necessarily small. People complain that they catch no large fish now as they used to do in the old days before netting in the river was abolished, but that they catch only numbers of fingerlings. They have not yet learned that either you must have a medium stock of fish and large ones, or a teeming stock and small ones.

In the way of netting, great things are sometimes done upon the Broad. I have heard of £4 worth of fish being taken before breakfast. This netting does not hurt the river, unless it is pursued at breeding-time, when the fish go from the river to the Broads to spawn. At other times it is well known that the fish do not travel to and fro; those that have taken to the river always prefer staying there, and go back after spawning. There may be certain exceptions to this rule, as when a high salt tide drives the fish before it up the river. Many

may then make for the fresh water of the Broads, but the vast majority head up the river until they lose the extreme saltness which is hurtful to them.

Then there are bow-nets set in the runs between the weeds for tench and eels, into which the bream too often crowd and keep out the more valuable fish. With the first frosts, the wild-fowl come in great numbers; but with hard and long-continued frosts, they depart to the shores and mud-flats of estuaries, where alone they can obtain food—and the Broads are at such times lonely and deserted, or given up to skaters.

The Broadman's food is chiefly fish and fowl; and he describes the heron's breast as tasting exactly like a stewed shin of beef, but says that the legs are very strong-flavoured

CHAPTER XX.

A SAIL ON A WHERRY—COLDHAM HALL TO SOMERLEYTON.

FOLLOWING out our plan of illustrating sections of the rivers by describing cruises upon them, we ask the reader to accompany us for a day's sail in a wherry—a pleasant and cheap way, by the by, of having a day on the water, and one always available.

On a day which the month of February appeared to have stolen from the scanty stock of summer (in fraudulent exchange, perhaps, for one we might encounter in July), two of us were standing on the staithe at Coldham Hall in conversation with a boat-builder, when H—— suggested that we should hail a wherry coming down the river and go for a sail in her. No sooner said than done, and the wherry drew sufficiently near to the bank to allow us to jump on board as she passed. We soon found that the wherryman, his wife and boy, were very civil and respectable. The cabin was beautifully clean and tidy, and boasted of a fireplace with an oven under.

"We live so much on board, and get so tired of having everything boiled and stewed, that we thought we must have an oven," explained the woman.

There was a light fair wind from the north-west, and as the tide was against us, our progress was not very rapid. The writer took the helm, and the man, after carefully watching his proceedings for a few minutes, seemed to think it was in safe hands, and went forward to take it easy. After leaving Rockland Broad, there is nothing of any interest until we reach Buckenham Ferry. A long avenue of poplars leads from the ferry to the station, and in the gale of October 1881 no less than fifty or sixty of these trees were blown down, and many others rendered so unsafe that they have since been cut down. One tree is so lightly rooted and so balanced that it is said to rise or fall as the wind blows strong from the west or east. In a dyke among the trees which surround the ferry-house, a little cabin-boat is moored in which an artist has lived all the winter. On wet days he amuses himself by painting the view seen from the window of the inn, which is simply a windmill and a belt of reeds, with the river in front; and in his many pictures of this landscape, the artist shows how varied are the tones which the water receives from the sky, so that on no two days are the colour and effect precisely alike.

Below Buckenham Ferry the river channel is wider and deeper, and more suited to large yachts; but the

scenery is of no special interest, particularly in the winter months.

On this mild and sunny day the larks were singing merrily everywhere; a flock of "piewipes" (lapwings) came sweeping over us with a great sound of wings beating the air in unison, and the birds looked now all white and now all black as they turned in their flight with the regularity of a flock of starlings; here and there a kestrel hovered over the marsh, and here and there a wild duck rose from a dyke: but with these exceptions, the river was singularly bare of life.

As we passed the dyke which leads up to Langley, the man said—

"I got a load of ice out of that dyke in the only frost there has been this winter, which I sold for £7; but I had to pay £3 for labour."

"How do you get the ice on board?"

"We have ice 'dydles,' sir. They are large nets made of wire, at the end of a pole, with which we can scoop the broken pieces of ice up. There isn't such a call for river-ice as there was, because the Norway ice is so cheap and comes in such large blocks. It has spoiled our market altogether; and when there is much ice, it does not pay to gather it."

The reaches from Langley dyke to Cantley are the best for match-sailing on the river, and several regattas are held at Cantley in the course of the year. Cantley Red House is an inn much frequented by anglers. A

little lower down is the Devil's Round House, said to be so called because the Devil pulled the original erection down in the course of its building. It is curious to note the frequency with which the name of the Evil One is associated with localities in East Anglia.

As we sailed quietly down the curving reaches of the wide river, the sun became obscured and the temperature fell many degrees, so that we began to regret our reliance on February sunshine. In the north-east sky the clouds began to gather and break away in long rolls.

"We shall have a change of wind from the eastward in half an hour," remarked the man; and his prophecy proved correct, for the wind suddenly headed us, and we had to tack; and after a little practice at this, the amateur at the helm began to feel that tacking a wherry was as easy as tacking a small yacht.

On the south bank is Hardley Cross, which marks the division between the Yarmouth and Norwich jurisdictions over the river. The Norwich Corporation annually make an excursion so far down the river, and at the Cross the following proclamation is read, and the reader must find out the meaning of the hard words in it for himself:—

"Oyez, oyez, oyez! If there be any manner of persons that will absume, purify, implead, or present any action, suit, plaint, or plea for any offence, trespass, or misdemeanour done or committed upon the Queen's Majesty's river of Wenson, let him repair unto the Right Worshipful Mr Mayor and the Worshipful Sheriff of the city

of Norwich for the redress thereof, and he shall be heard."

At Hardley Cross is the mouth of the small river Chet, which is navigable for three or four miles to Loddon, but it is too narrow and insignificant for pleasure-sailing.

As we tacked past Reedham Ferry the sun came out, and the air again felt balmy. Reedham village is picturesque enough, with its staithes and the wherries lying at them. This is the last point of high land on the Yare, and, before the subsidence of the sea, must have formed a considerable promontory, jutting out into the estuary or bay whose waters washed its base. We steered safely through Reedham swing-bridge, where the railway crosses, and then turned into the straight canal which connects the Yare with the Waveney. The light east wind barely rippled the smooth surface of the cut, and for three miles there was nothing to be seen but the two straight lines of the banks converging, with a wherry at the point where they seemed to meet.

Seeing preparations for a meal going on, the writer and H—— went forward and debated what they should do. They had come for their sail without premeditation or provision, and felt hungry; while in the winter-time it is difficult to obtain anything but bread and cheese at a river-side inn. They had almost decided to land at Had-discoe and take their chance, when the boy came forward with two plates, and on each plate two sausage-rolls, very nicely made; and he requested to know whether we would

partake of them or of some rabbit-pie. So we made a sumptuous lunch, and washed it down with tea, of which the wherryman told us he drank two large *basinfuls* at each meal. By this time we were on friendly terms with our hosts, and learned a good deal of their simple history. The carrying trade had been very bad, and they found it hard work to earn 15s. a-week. The man said he thought he should like to emigrate to Australia, for the railways were taking the trade off the rivers. The wife and the small boy did not like the wherrying, and the boy was fonder of reading than steering. As we were speaking, he had gone with his book into the forepeak, whence there presently came the sound of some Salvation Army hymns which the youngster was singing softly to himself.

When we entered the Waveney the tide was strong against us, and the daylight was fading; so at Somerleyton we jumped ashore, leaving our friends to draw slowly on until they reached Oulton Broad, which they would probably do about nine or ten o'clock at night. Wherries, however, do not often sail at night. The man was reluctant to accept any "tip," which raised him still higher in our good graces. It is not often, of course, that one meets with such a model family; and H—— was so smitten, that a parcel of books afterwards found their way to the boy—which may not have been a judicious gift, as, say what you like, increased education and the increased mental indulgence which it brings induce a dislike to purely laborious and poorly paid occupations.

The channels of the Yare from Reedham to Breydon, and of the Waveney from Haddiscoe to Breydon, present no features of any descriptive interest. Of the Waveney from Somerleyton to Beccles the next chapter will give an account.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WAVENEY.

THE Waveney is a very pleasant river to sail upon, because its waters are deep, and you may tack from bank to bank without fear of running aground. The extreme limpidity of the water in the upper reaches is striking, and the bottom is less foul with mud than in the other rivers. But as it lies away from the Broads (with the exception of Oulton), it is not so much visited as the Bure. We make a point of sailing up to Beccles at least once a-year, and it is one of these trips which we will now describe.

Late one evening we reached Somerleyton Bridge, and as the tide was against us and the wind had completely died away, we lay to for the night on the Reedham side of the bridge, thinking that we should easily be able to get through it in the morning. But the wind which the clouds foretold came up in the night, and with the wind came rain so fierce, that when the morning broke it was apparent that we had better stay where we were until things mended. The whole of that August day until six o'clock it rained as if a second deluge were coming, and

blew a strong gale dead against our course through the bridge. Even the wherries could not get through with the tide ; and when weary of inaction, we close-reefed the sail and made an effort to tack through the narrow opening : we came to grief in the attempt, and had to return to our mooring-place. Another yacht, the *Spray*, lay close by us, and did not think it wise to stir ; and we could do nothing but sit in our little cabin and grumble at this the worst bridge to get through on the Waveney. It will show the depth of the ooze when it is mentioned that the piles of this bridge were driven in 70 feet before a sufficiently firm foundation was reached.

In the evening the rain ceased, and the wind in half an hour fell to a dead calm, so we took a walk along a belt of trees which skirts the path to a woodland pool, whose waters were completely hidden by the lilies, and surrounded by venerable trees. This is Wicker Well ; and noting that it was within easy reach of the river, we resolved to photograph it if the morrow were fine.

From Somerleyton to Herringfleet is a range of high land on the east bank of the river, where in parts the heather blooms, its purple glow speaking eloquently of other far-away scenes where the heather is as characteristic as the reed is here. It is said that the air at Somerleyton has a more than ordinary amount of ozone in it ; and therefore it should be very healthy.

The day spoiled by the storm was forgotten in the brilliant morning which saw us glide with a fair wind

through the dreaded bridge and away up the Waveney, while the larks sang by the score up where the eye could not see them, because of the dazzling light reflected from the swan-breasted clouds. When opposite Wicker Well we ran the yacht's bowsprit in among the flags, and landed with the camera. We had not gone far before a *rencontre* with a bull made the skipper and his wife negotiate a five-barred gate with great celerity. In the wood the air was redolent with the odour of flower and herb drawn out by the heat, and the beams of light shooting between the thick-leaved branches and peering into dark and green recesses, made visible golden insect-clouds. With a memento of the lovely scene secured, we retraced our steps, and, *nolens volens*, prepared to face the bull and defy him with the spikes of the tripod, for we could reach the boat no other way; but the bull was lying down somewhere out of sight, and we escaped his attention. As we were hoisting sail the Spray passed us, and we followed about half a mile behind. The wind was in the main southerly, but at times veered round to all parts of the compass, so that while the Spray going south-westward had a fair wind, we, half a mile behind and going in the same direction, had a head wind. Then the position was reversed; and once, after tacking half a reach, the wind suddenly came dead aft, so that there was something to think about and do besides keeping a look-out for beds of bulrushes and filling the jolly with the kingly stems.

A prominent object on this part of the marsh is the church tower of Burgh St Peter, which is built in steps narrowing to a point, and presents a most un-English appearance.

For some miles the river scenery presents just such characteristics as we have many times described in this book, and we dare not repeat them ; and we sailed on without incident, except noticing the great number of cuckoos which were flying about from bush to bush on the banks, until we came to Aldeby railway bridge, which was open. The porters in charge beckoned to us to come on ; and although we saw that there was a train leaving Beccles Station, we were bound to obey them. But as we got under the lee of the bridge the wind failed us, and we remained motionless in the bridge-way. To our horror the train still came on ; and getting out the quant, we tried our best to get out of what looked rather like an awkward predicament. The porters commenced to close the bridge as fast as they could. We shoved clear, and the bridge clicked to, just as the train reached it, and passed over in safety, the passengers with their heads out of the windows in great alarm. It was an uncomfortable five minutes, and we were glad to moor under the shade of a well-wooded bank and rest a while.

The Waveney is a good fishing river, and used to be celebrated for its perch. A barber of Beccles told us that many years ago he had caught eleven perch, weighing 2 lb. each, in one spot in a couple of hours, using gudgeon

as bait, but that it was impossible now. He had also traced an outline of a perch weighing 3 lb., which, with another of the same weight, he had caught in the Waveney. Now that netting is abolished, the Waveney may regain its old repute.

From the river, Beccles has a pretty appearance. It stands well on high ground, and is dominated by a fine and massive church—a peculiarity of which is, that its main tower stands apart from it. We rowed up—past fishing-parties, composed of family groups (the day was a public holiday), comfortably settled on the banks, and apparently provided with a liberal allowance of “grub”—under the narrow stone bridge, and landed below the church.

“There’s a man with a concertina on sticks,” quoth one urchin.

“No, it isn’t. He is going to take the church’s likeness,” said another, more advanced in worldly knowledge.

The river is navigable up to Bungay, which, by the sinuous course of the river, is some ten miles; but as it is not wide or deep enough to induce many yachts to make the journey up, we have never undertaken it. The view over the valley from Beccles churchyard, looking up the river, is especially fine: the narrow river winds through the marsh, which is itself like a broad green river flowing between the wooded slopes on either hand. As the afternoon was wearing on, the breeze dying, and we had ten miles or thereabouts to sail before reaching

Oulton Broad, we again took to our jolly, and were rowing back, when we were stopped by the shouts of some workmen who were running after us.

"If you please, sir, will you stop? Me and my mate has got a bet on. He says that boat of yours is copper, and I says it is canvas; and we ha' got a quart on it. Would you be so obliging as to let us feel it, sir?" And of course we were so kind; and they prodded and poked the canvas skin of the little "Berthon" collapsible boat, until they satisfied themselves on the point. The man who thought it was copper scratched his head and took the chaff of his companions meekly, and they all went off together to enjoy their quart.

We dropped slowly down the stream, using the sweep nearly all the way, while the gloaming deepened, and the stars came out, and eleven o'clock that night saw us quanting along Oulton Dyke in company with several wherries and yachts returning from a water frolic on Breydon. We dropped anchor the moment we reached the Broad, for we were dead tired, and then the skipper had to row the length of the lake to the Wherry inn for materials for supper, leaving the riding light burning as a guide for him on his return. The small light, glimmering in the darkness so far away, seemed very lonely, and the skipper was glad to get back again. The day had been too long and tiring, and the skipper's better half was soon in her hammock and fast asleep. The skipper turned in to his soon after, and at once dropped off into a heavy

slumber. The wife presently awoke, and believing him to be still outside, said, "Oh, do come into the cabin. It is so late, and you are keeping me awake." The skipper, being only half aroused, supposed that he had fallen asleep outside, and replied, "All right ; I shan't be long stowing away. I'll be inside in a minute."

"Why, you *are* in your hammock ! How stupid you are !"

"Well, I thought you must be right, my dear. You always are, you know, and you said I was outside."

"Don't talk nonsense, and don't awake me again."

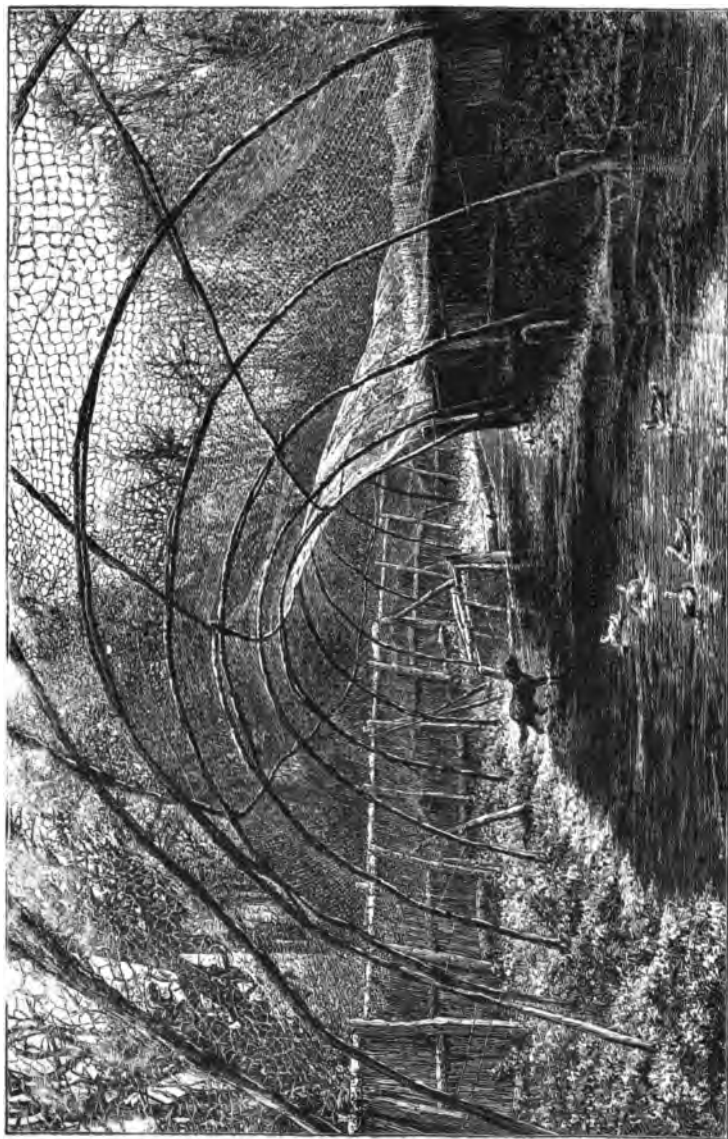
When one's holidays occur but rarely, one is tempted to compress too much into them, and so to get excessively tired, which neutralises the pleasure ; and this day was one on which we both felt great fatigue, simply because we had lingered too long at Beccles and lost the wind.

CHAPTER XXII.

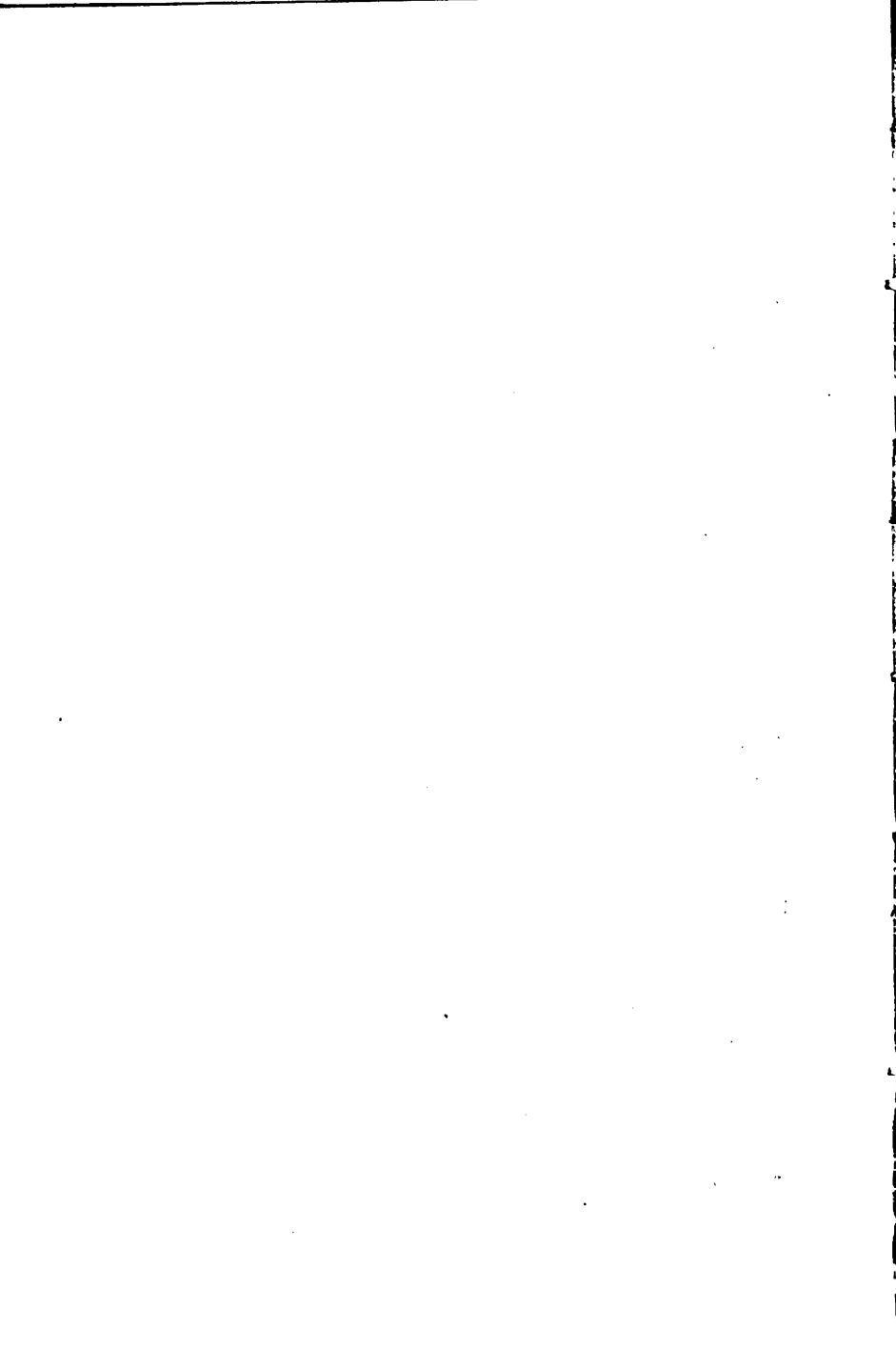
FRITTON DECOY.

WHEN with the approach of winter the wild-fowl come to us from northern latitudes, they find but little of that quiet and seclusion which are necessary to their abiding with us in any great numbers. The protuberance of Norfolk and Suffolk into the North Sea arrests a large number of the southward-speeding birds, and the great lagoons, silent rivers, and far-stretching marshes of East Anglia offer them a safer harbourage than do other parts of England. Yet the proportion of fowl remaining even in so suitable a district is not by any means so large as formerly. Of course there are many reasons for this: marshes are drained and lakes lose their wildness, the number of sportsmen is greatly increased, and no spot is long free in the winter-time from the noise of guns. The chief cause, however, in our opinion, is the decadence and disuse of decoys; and this view is shared by most of the "water-abiders" among the Broads.

One night, while out on a certain quest on the river



INTERIOR OF THE DECOY-PIPE.



Bure, near Ranworth, in the midst of the best possible grounds, or waters rather, for wild-fowl, we were struck by the scarcity of ducks going to and fro at night and morning "flight" time; and on remarking this to the eel-fisher who was with us, he said, "Oh, it was a bad job the giving up of Ranworth decoy. When that was worked, there was plenty of fowl for the decoy, and plenty for the flight-shooters; but since the decoy was given up and the Broad shot over, the ducks don't come, and nobody gets any."

The reason of this is obvious when the habits of ducks are considered. They feed chiefly by night, when, in the cover and silence of the darkness, they fly to different feeding-grounds, which they dare not visit in the day-time. Just before dawn they fly back in small bodies to some sequestered lake, where the Argus eyes of numbers collected together afford a feeling of security to the timid fowl. If they are not disturbed in their retreat, they spend the daylight there, feeding a little, sleeping a little, and preening themselves until the night gives them leave to go forth in fancied safety. It is while they are thus collected in numbers that they fall victims to the decoy. So silently and skilfully, however, is the decoying practised, that, while half a hundred ducks are having their necks wrung by the decoy-man within fifty yards of the water's-edge, hundreds more may be sitting on the water close by, all unconscious of the tragedy which is being enacted.

No phase of the pursuit of wild creatures by man for food or profit is more interesting than the system of decoying wild-fowl, as practised for generations in East Anglia. Wild-fowl decoys have decreased sadly in number during the last generation; yet in these days of depressed agriculture, it is surprising that gentlemen who have the opportunities of suitable possessions, do not embark in what is really a profitable pursuit. A small wild-fowl decoy would pay better than a small farm nowadays, and at a smaller expenditure of capital and labour.

Much of the mystery which formerly surrounded the working of decoys has been dispelled by the patient investigations of Mr Thomas Southwell, F.Z.S., who has gone into the subject with loving zeal, and made his discoveries public. It is to him that we owe the pleasure of seeing a decoy worked, and we shall long remember a visit we paid in his company to one of the decoys at Fritton.

Decoying was the only item of the wild life still existing in the Broad district with which we had not made ourselves acquainted, and time after time we had let opportunities slip.

The day after Christmas 1881 lifted the veil of secrecy. A misty morning brightened into a sunny day, and thin sheets of glistening ice threw a sheen over the green and slightly flooded marshes. The worst aspect of Norfolk marsh scenery is that seen from the railway. The noise and rush of the train are foreign to the lonely calm and eloquent silence of the river-highways and the level land through which they glide.

Fritton Lake is not, strictly speaking, a Broad, as it is not connected with or a broadening of any river. It is also out of the marsh district, in a sylvan part about three miles from the coast, and midway between Yarmouth and Lowestoft, and is really a deep lake, about three miles long and a sixth of a mile wide, of a straggling and irregular shape, lying between wooded banks of great beauty, and with numerous creeks or indentations, of which advantage has been taken to construct the decoys. There are two groups of decoys, one at each end of the lake; and those we saw worked are at the east end, and are the property of Sir Saville Crossley. A decoy should be sheltered from all observation of passers-by on roads or fields; but owing to gaps caused by the falling of large numbers of trees in the great gale of October 14, 1881, we could from the highroad catch glimpses of the water in the secluded bay where the decoys lay. Two or three score of ducks were swimming quietly about; and the keeper told us that men driving by would, out of sheer wantonness, crack their whips or shout, for the purpose of putting the fowl to flight. He had built up huge bastions of reeds in the spaces left by the recumbent trees to screen the decoy; but the damage caused by the gale was not so easily set right, and the fowl were much shier than before. Decoys are worked, if fowl are plentiful, twice a-day—morning and evening; but this exceptionally mild winter, only very few ducks had come south, and consequently very few were at the “coy,” as the keeper called it. The

weather in which the most ducks came was snowy cold weather, when the ground was covered with snow, and food hard to get at, yet when the frost was not severe enough to "lay" the larger pools. At the time of our visit the decoy had not been worked for a few days, and some fowl were present, but very shy, as some one had been passing up wind of them, and the keeper had seen a footmark in the wood which was not his own. Cautioning us to stoop as low as he did, not to cough or sneeze, or speak above a whisper, or tread on a dry branch, the keeper gave us a bit of smouldering turf, the object of which is to destroy the human scent, which would otherwise travel down wind and alarm the ducks.

Like all other birds, ducks like to swim or rise with the wind in their faces; hence it is only possible to work those pipes which are to windward of the birds, and in all decoys there are pipes made to suit the prevailing winds.

The decoy-dog accompanied us, and was a retriever of reddish colour, red being apparently a colour which more powerfully excites the curiosity of the ducks than any other. This dog was a large one—too large, the man said, inasmuch as small dogs were found to be more effective. As we approached the lake we entered a dry ditch, with a bank thrown up on the side next the water. This was the "traverse," or means of approach to the decoy; and along a series of these traverses we proceeded crouching double, hats off, the peat-smoke making our eyes water, and the dog tripping us up. There was something decidedly con-

spirator-like in this stealthy progress over the soft dead leaves in the narrow ditch, and under the deep gloom of the trees and bushes which shaded the earthworks; and our expectations were wound up to a high pitch, our eagerness being, however, checked by our guide, who, in hoarse whispers, bade us "keep lower, keep lower,"—a necessary admonition in the case of one of us, whose back, which is longer than the average, ached dreadfully already.

In order that the reader may understand the subsequent proceedings, we will leave ourselves crouching breathlessly behind the reed-screens while we explain what an after-inspection, when there were no ducks present, revealed of the plan of a decoy. Out of the quiet wood-surrounded bay, dykes, or arms of water, extend into the land. Each dyke is about 18 feet wide at the mouth, and gradually narrows to a point, curving the while to the right, or with the sun for about the quarter of a circle, and is 80 or 90 yards along the curve. Over this dyke are light arches, sometimes made of long pliant rods and sometimes of iron. These, again, are covered partly with cord network and partly with galvanised wire-netting, the network being generally near the mouth, where it is more invisible than the wire, and the wire-netting over the rest. These avenues of netting are called pipes, and are, speaking roughly, 10 feet high at the open end, diminishing rapidly to 3 feet in diameter. At the small end is a pair of double posts, in the groove between which slips the first hoop of the "tunnel net," which is a bow-net 8 or 10 feet

long, the extreme end of which is stretched out and tied to a stake. Owing to the curve of the pipe, the ducks in the decoy can only see a short way up it, and the massacre of their comrades and the movements of the decoy-man are unseen by them. Along the outer curve of the pipe, for a distance of nearly half its length from the mouth, screens made of reeds are placed obliquely, overlapping each other, and about a yard apart, the openings looking up the pipe; while towards the lake they present an impenetrable front. Continuous screens along the edge of the lake near the pipe, and outside the pipe and oblique screens, still further add to the secrecy.

Inside the pipe is a wire-work pen, in which is immured a lively quacking duck. The water in front of the pipe and inside is kept free from weeds, and is very shallow, with, if possible, a hard bottom, so that the "feed" with which the decoy is plentifully supplied may be easily seen and got at by the fowl. The oblique screens are connected by low barriers called dog-jumps. Through two or three of the screens flat sticks of wood are inserted edgewise. If these are turned flatwise, they form small openings or peep-holes, through one of which the keeper has been peering while we wait.

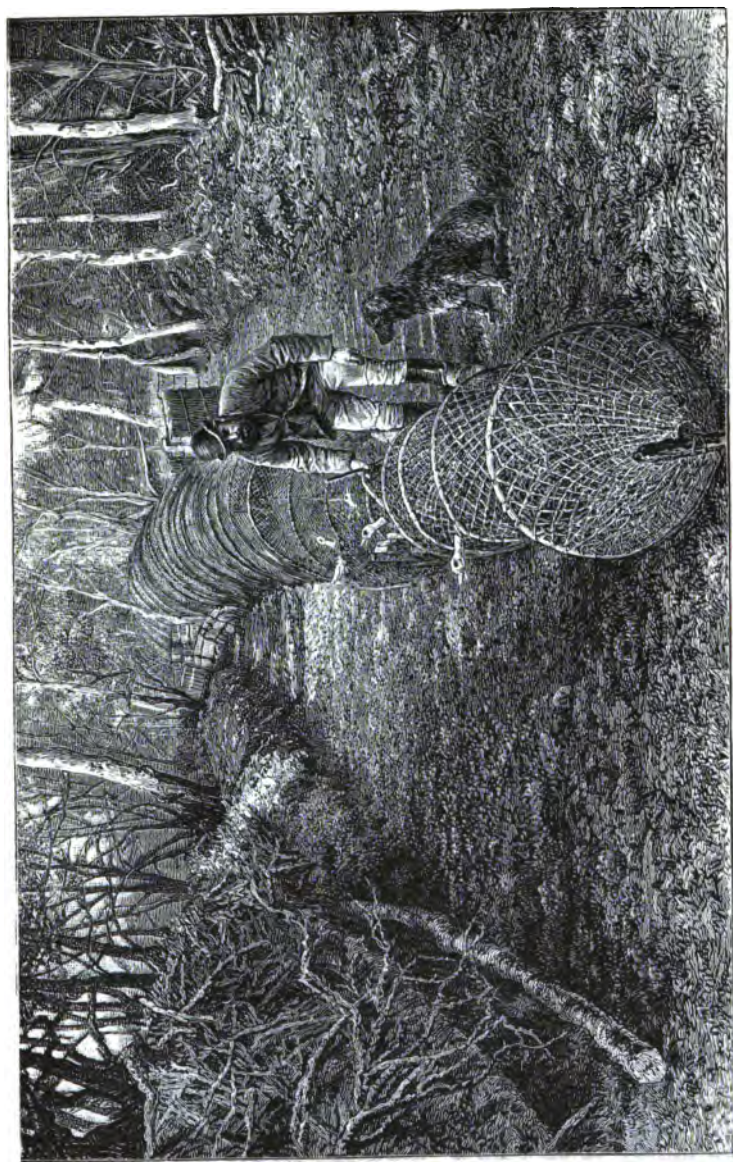
Blowing his turf to fan the smouldering fire, he beckoned us on, but with emphatic gesticulations to keep low. He planted each of us at an eye-hole, and then we saw a very beautiful and interesting sight. Quite at the mouth of the pipe was a flock of teal paddling quietly about, some

with their heads tucked back fast asleep, and others toppling over, feeding on the grains which had sunk to the bottom; but the greater number just floating lazily, with the sun shining on their glossy blue and chestnut heads. It was indeed a curious sight to see these wild and timid little creatures within a few yards of us, all unconscious of the presence of three men intent on their capture. We held our breaths for fear of disturbing the intense stillness which reigned around,—a stillness so great that the cry of a distant jay caused the ducks to lift their heads in listening attention. Beyond the flock of teal were several decoy-ducks—tame ducks of a colour and marking as nearly as possible like the mallard. These decoy-ducks are kept in the decoy, and trained to come in for food whenever they see the decoy-dog, or hear a low whistle from the decoy-man. Beyond the decoy-ducks was a flock of mallards, looking large and sitting high on the water compared with the teal.

Then the obedient decoy-dog jumped over one of the jumps on to the narrow strip of margin within the pipe, and so became visible to the fowl, returning to his master over the next one. In an instant every head was up among the teal, and with outstretched necks they swam towards the dog, their bright eyes twinkling, and every movement indicating a pleased curiosity. They halted as the dog disappeared; but as, at a sign from the keeper, he jumped into the pipe again higher up, the birds again eagerly followed him. They were now well within the

pipe, and directly under my nose. The keeper ran silently towards the mouth of the pipe, so as to get behind them; and then appearing at one of the openings between the screens, he waved his handkerchief,—a motion invisible to the ducks still outside the pipe, but a terrifying sight to those within. In an instant they rose and flew up the pipe in a panic, the man following them up and waving his handkerchief at each opening. As the pipe grew narrower, the doomed birds struggled along, half flying, half running. Only one dared to turn back and fly out of the pipe, regaining safety by its boldness. The others crowded through into the tunnel net; and when all were in, the keeper detached the first hoop from the grooves, gave it a twist, and so secured the ducks.

As we ran up after the keeper, one of us took the opportunity of straightening his back, thinking that all necessity for further concealment was at an end. Immediately there was a rush of wings, and a flock of mallards left the decoy. "There now, you ha' done it!" exclaimed the keeper, excitedly; "all them mallards were following the dog into the pipe, and we could ha' got a second lot." We expressed our sorrow in becoming terms, and watched the very expeditious way in which he extracted the birds from the tunnel net, wrung their necks, and flung them into a heap. Several of the poor things were not immediately killed, but tried to flutter away, and were brought back by the dog. We had got twenty-one birds, nineteen being teal and two mallards.



END OF THE DECOY-PIPE.

Proceeding to another pipe along another series of trenches, the dog was set to work again; but although there were plenty of ducks outside the pipe, none would follow the decoy-ducks in, or give way to their curiosity anent the dog. Their suspicions had been aroused by the flight of their companions, and they gathered closer and closer together in that unmistakable manner which means impending flight; so the keeper whispered, "Come away; they won't come to the 'coy, and they must not be put to flight." So we slouched away to another pipe near which there were no ducks at all, and at last we could straighten ourselves, talk in our natural voices, and question the keeper, who was quite willing to explain everything we wished to know. The lake was well stocked with pike; but during the pike season—that is, the autumn and winter months—no fishing was allowed and no persons permitted on the water, so that absolute quiet might be preserved. A strip of common on the opposite shore was a great trial to him, as persons would go and shoot there, keeping the fowl in an uneasy state of suspense and alarm. When the lake was closed to the public, the ducks that were bred in the neighbourhood first collected, and it was important that there should be good breeding-grounds near the decoy, as the presence of the "natives" was extremely useful in inducing the foreigners to make the decoy their home. The openings of the pipes were kept liberally supplied with corn and other food, so that the ducks might have every induce-

ment to come close in to rest ; and occasionally they fed so far up the pipe that the services of the dog were not required, but they could be driven up at once. Except to work the decoy, he never approached it in the day-time, all necessary work being done after the "rising of the decoy,"—that is, after the fowl had left on their nightly excursions. In hard weather, when the ice formed during the night, it had to be broken in the early morning before the ducks returned—as, unless the pipes and a space of water in front of them were kept open, the decoy could not be worked. The cold and exposure attendant on this night-work were very trying at times. In a hard frost it is intensely exciting to watch the several species of ducks sitting on the edges of the ice and on the open water in front of the pipes, and in great numbers ; and if there had been a single hard frost in the summer-winter of 1881-82, we should have visited the decoy again. Few places are suitable for decoys, for country life is not so quiet as it once was. There is a noisier traffic on the roads, farming operations are more extensive and obtrusive, railways intersect the wildest regions ; and unless one possessed a considerable tract of land around the decoy, from which all intruders could be kept, it would be difficult to secure the necessary quietude. But where the situation is favourable, we believe a decoy could even now be worked profitably, as the statistics collected by Mr Southwell will show. These statistics and very much interesting valuable information about decoys are contained in an

article by Mr Southwell in 'Blackwood's Magazine' for December 1881.

From Mr Southwell we learn that about six decoys are now worked either regularly or occasionally in Norfolk. I do not know whether there are any in the other parts of East Anglia; but not many, I fear. The present rage for shooting will go far towards exterminating the decoys, and landlords who feel the pinch of tenantless farms, will let the shooting of places which for generations have not been disturbed by the sportsman's gun. From the same source we learn that at the decoy now being described the average take of fowl each season is 1000. This last winter, however, it was very small, as, on a visit there in the spring, the keeper said that only about 250 fowl had been taken—less than a day's work in more prosperous times.

In a shed at the keeper's cottage the fowl were laid out and counted—21 to our computation, 11½ to the keeper's; the reason being that teal and widgeon are only accounted as "half-fowl," and two go to one mallard, or twenty-four to the dozen.

Our walk back lay along a mossy avenue of fir and larch trees, still with the stillness of untrodden woods, while down on our right we caught glimpses of the calm water, flecked here and there with fowl. The avenue ended in a bare promontory from which a long vista of wood-fringed lake lay stretched before us, softened with the yellow haze of the declining day. On the highest

point of the open ground was a tall pole with chocks of wood nailed on each side to form steps for its easy ascent. "That's put there for a point of vantage from which to admire the view," quoth our friend, and he proceeded to climb it, but gave up his attempt on discerning a hawk-trap at the top of it. Hawks of all kinds are injurious to a decoy, as, although they may rarely succeed in carrying off any fowl, yet they keep them wakeful and alarmed. So advantage is taken of the propensity of the hawk tribe to perch on high bare points, and spring traps are set on tall poles; and the unhappy hawk, alighting to rest for a space, is caught by the legs, and hangs dangling in the air until the keeper, chancing to come by, puts an end to its sufferings.

Our next visit to Fritton was in the spring, for the purpose of photographing the salient points of the decoys, and we were favoured with a still, bright day. We first visited the decoys belonging to Colonel Leathes at the Fritton end of the lake, and the views of the screens and the interior of the pipes are of these decoys. The fourth view, representing the end of the pipe and the tunnel net, is the one which we had seen worked in the winter. Altogether, we obtained sixteen negatives, all of them good and typical, and a set as unique as in a few years' time they will be valuable. The lake was then merry with Easter Monday holiday-parties, and picnics were held at the very mouth of the pipes. We saw some breeding teal there, and the keeper said that subsequent seasons

ought to be excellent for fowl, as so many had been left to breed. The decoy-ducks were still swimming about the decoy, and we found some of their nests among the rough herbage and brushwood behind the pipes. A curious fact in connection with these nests was, that the birds on leaving them covered the eggs over with dead leaves so as to hide them. This is an interesting bit of evidence in favour of reason rather than instinct, for these were domestic ducks leading a semi-wild life and taking the precautions observed by wild-fowl.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OULTON BROAD.

OULTON BROAD presents in itself a curious contrast. At the eastern end there is the village of Mutford Bridge, with many quaint buildings; the lock with steam and sailing vessels passing and repassing, warehouses, staithes, boat-yards, inns, and all the activity of business and pleasure. All the yachts, too, are moored there, and are present in goodly numbers. Looking westward, however, there is the silent distance of marsh and river, the loneliness peculiar to the Broads. It is this mixture of civilisation and wildness which makes Oulton so attractive as a resort.

A friend who made his first acquaintance with the Broads at Oulton joined us late one evening for a cruise, and, looking over the marsh, saw what seemed to him to be a boundless expanse of water, with only a few islands here and there, and rejoiced greatly at the splendid sailing before him. The mist, however, lying low and dense over water and land, caused this illusion, and in the morning

he was astonished to find his ocean shrunk to a moderate-sized lake.

The bight at the east end near the railway seems to be an asylum for old and disused smacks, for numbers of them lie against the shore, many half sunk, and, while they are picturesque in the extreme, take up much room. Among them you may see one or two queer dwellings. One in particular is a floating hut in which a waterman and his family live, and it gives one a cold shudder to see tiny children playing about over the smacks and in the most dangerous places. Providence seems to have an especial care over the children who live by the water-side. At every such habitation you hear tales of how children have fallen in and been rescued in the most accidental way, and the risk seems to be accepted as an ordinary one. It is easy for accidents to happen unobserved, as the following incident will show. We were standing one day by the river-side talking to several wherry-men, and with children playing about, when we heard a faint splash. Turning around we saw nothing but children playing on a wherry. No one else had heard the splash, and the men said it could have only been a dog or a stone. Not satisfied, however, we looked closely between the wherry and the bank, and caught sight of a small hand just disappearing. A boy had slipped in through a space of about 18 inches from the very midst of his fellows, without being missed and without a cry. When he was got out he was held upside

down by a brawny wherryman to let the water run out, and then his mother came and whipped him. Yet it is very rarely indeed that we hear of a death by drowning on these rivers.

The Broad has a fair depth of water, but the mud at the bottom is very soft and bad holding ground, and a heavy weight is of more use than an anchor. The large "ham" or bay at the western end is fast growing up, and has only depth enough for small boats.

Fishing and fowling are actively carried on at Oulton, as, notwithstanding attempts by the lord or lady of the manor to limit the right of fishing, the public have it their own way at present. Eel-spearing is practised here as elsewhere in these waters; and in the hard winter of 1879-80, when the Broad was frozen and remained so for a long time, the more knowing ones broke holes in the ice, where the water was shallow and the mud below not too deep, and speared the eels which collected beneath the air-hole, taking as many as 6 stone weight at one time.

In the summer of 1879 there was a heavy flood up the Waveney, and all the foul and stagnant water off the marshes was swept into the river, and, from some cause as yet unexplained, it was quite a red colour, and was so rank and poisonous that fish of all kinds died in immense quantities. Pike lay dead and dying everywhere; and up one dyke, where there was a spring of pure water, they crowded up and massed together as thick as they could be, many of them being large ones. The eels swam on the

surface of the river, and actually went out on the rond in their efforts to escape from the noxious "marsh tea." Tench suffered most in comparison with their numbers, for there were as many dead as there were roach and bream. One consequence of this state of things was, that the fish made for the purer waters of Oulton, and, to use a waterman's words, the Broad was "crammed with fish" of all kinds, and the sport experienced by anglers was something wonderful. The "bad water" was not the result of the salt tide, as sometimes happens, but appeared to come from the marshes. Whether at that time there was any plant flowering in large quantities, an infusion of which would be poisonous, can only be guessed.

The mode of tickling tench, which at one time was common enough on some of the Broads, is not generally known at Oulton; but one man is an adept at it. He has frequently taken up to 17 brace of tench, all large, in the course of a summer's afternoon. Watching where they bask on the surface in the hot sun, he would row gently up and note the short rushes of the disturbed fish into a bed of weeds, and then, approaching cautiously, he would take hold of the fish with his hands and lift it into the boat. The tench, so long as it does not see you, seems to think that the fingers gently creeping under its belly are only bits of weed, and it only wakes up when too late. Shallow weedy water and still hot days are essential for this work; and whether it is because the summers have for so long been cold and wet, or because the present

generation have lost the art, it is certain that this singular mode of capture is not now so commonly practised as of yore.

As you row about some quiet bay, you will suddenly be startled by resounding splashes around you. You have disturbed a shoal of grey mullet. We once frightened a shoal dreadfully by falling overboard amongst them. They are the strangest finny visitors to the Broad. They come in large numbers, and are always to be seen sunning themselves on the surface. They would no doubt give capital sport if they could be caught, as they run from 3 to 12 lb. in weight; but beyond an accidental capture of one or two, they seem insensible to any attraction the angler can offer them. Their mouths are so small that ordinary baits are out of the question. They appear to suck their food rather than gulp it, and the contents of their stomachs show that soft weeds and ooze form at least a large proportion of their food. They entrap themselves in the lock, and are there speared, and occasionally some are caught with a cast-net. Sometimes they commit suicide by jumping into boats. Once, while sailing past Reedham, we heard a loud *spang* behind us, and on turning round saw a large mullet floundering in the jolly. As we were single-handed it was some time before it could be secured, and its scales, which come off easily, were plastered all over the little boat. It was then we first noticed the extraordinary and offensive smell which the grey mullet emits, and which made us somewhat doubtful as to the propriety of cooking it. After

cleaning and cooking, however, the smell had disappeared, and the fish tasted very nice indeed. This propensity of attempting to leap over anything which appears to be in their way is a well-known characteristic of the grey mullet, and makes it difficult to catch them in any draw-net, for they leap over the top rope and escape.

The gravelly spots which project into the Broad here and there, harbour some good-sized perch, but the ever-increasing mud threatens to cover every space of gravel; and, except in the Waveney, the perch is undoubtedly decreasing in numbers in the Broad district.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LAKE LOTHING.

FROM Lowestoft harbour Lake Lothing, now a tidal lake, extends inland for some two miles, and is separated by a lock from Oulton Broad. Fifty years ago, both the Broad and the lake were fresh water, separated from each other only by a bridge over the dyke, and of course on the same level. It is supposed by some people that the river Waveney once had an outlet at Lowestoft; but others, equally competent to form an opinion, deny that this was so. However this may be, a narrow strip of sand separated the lake from the sea, and the latter sometimes burst over and invaded the lake. About the year 1818, it appeared to many that a harbour could be constructed at Lowestoft, by separating the Broad from the Lake by means of a lock, and connecting the lake with the sea. The idea of the adventurers was, that Norwich would be made a port; that ships from the south could enter at Lowestoft, ten miles nearer than Yarmouth, could sail along Oulton dyke, when enlarged, into the river Waveney,

thence along an artificial canal or cut from the Waveney at Haddiscoe, to the Yare at Reedham, and so on up to Norwich. The plan met with great opposition from the Yarmouth folk, but ultimately was authorised by Act of Parliament, and carried out successfully. Lowestoft has certainly benefited by the construction of the harbour there, and now ranks as a first-class fishing-station,—though we question whether Norwich has gained so much by being a “port” as she expected. At all events, it does not seem to pay to keep the New Cut well dredged or “dydled,” and vessels may often be seen aground in it at low tide.

If Yarmouth had not selfishly refused to allow laden vessels to pass above their bridge, compelling them to discharge cargo at Yarmouth, it is very likely that the Norwich and Lowestoft navigation would not have been thought of. In addition, however, to the Yarmouth opposition, the landowners opposed the scheme, for fear of inundation; but science prevailed, and in September 1827 the demolition of the old bridge commenced the navigation works, and a regatta was held in celebration. In a picture of the event, an engraving of which is given in Stark's ‘River Scenery of Norfolk and Suffolk,’ the wherries and yachts cluster in goodly numbers, and some of the latter are rigged like wherries. The other yachts are of the type which still survives on Oulton,—a lug mainsail and mizzen. Now Lowestoft is a thriving rival to Yarmouth, and is increasing her harbour accommodation largely; and the

salt water, which, breaking in over the sandy shore, swept up Lake Lothing and on to Oulton Broad once in a generation, now peacefully flows twice a-day to the lock at Mutford, which divides the salt from the fresh water.

Lake Lothing dwindles away at ebb-tide to a very narrow and shallow channel, with the delusive guide-posts islanded in mud. One day, coming in from sea, we were tacking up the lake against the ebb, when a steam-tug with a long stream of barges in tow came down. There was no room to tack, and barely room to pass, and we had to anchor as near the side of the channel as we dared, with the tide fast ebbing, and our keel touching the mud, while the barges slowly filed past. Another feature of yachting in the lower part of this lake is, that the ships and smacks are continually warping about and changing their positions: the warps stretch straight across, and spring up suddenly just in front of you. One day we got foul of no less than five warps while drifting down to the bridge, and without wind to give us steerage-way. This lower end of the lake is called the inner harbour; and in the fishing season, when the smacks come in, it is really a wonderful sight. The smart, yacht-like Lowes-toft smacks, swift Penzance luggers, broad-beamed Scotch luggers, dirty and untidy French boats, and, most curious of all, the square-ended Dutch craft, form a crowd of infinite interest to our eyes. Between the inner and the outer harbour is a swing-bridge, over which the road passes. This is a constant and infinite annoyance to

yachts. The men are supposed to be on the look-out for vessels as long as a red flag is held up ; but small yachts do not command much attention, and you go drifting with the tide, shouting yourself hoarse, while the bridge remains shut : your heart is in your mouth expecting a smash, when at the last moment the bridge is cleared of passengers, and begins to open just in time. When the red flag is up the bridge cannot be opened ; and on one occasion up went the flag when we were within a hundred yards of the bridge. A fine yawl was the last vessel moored on our side, and within twenty yards of the bridge. We naturally made for her, intending to hang on to her for a short time ; but on calling to the skipper to make our rope fast, he surlily said, "No, I won't ; I don't want you rubbing alongside of us." This is the only instance of incivility we have ever met with on the part of an English waterman. One of his crew was more considerate, or we might have fared badly, as there was nothing below to hold on by. A French crew once refused to slacken their hawser to allow us to pass ; but the application of a knife to the rope induced them to change their minds with great precipitation. .

At low water Lake Lothing is as malodorous as the worst of Dutch canals ; but when it is brimful with the tide, it is a pleasant sight enough, and its northern bank is somewhat picturesque ; while to a man nautically inclined, or to an artist, a ramble among the shipbuilders' yards and along the wharves is suggestive and instructive.

The account of the admission of the salt sea to the fresh lake in 1831, as told by the Rev. Alfred Suckling in his 'History of Suffolk,' is so interesting that it will bear quotation. He says:—

“On Friday the 3d June in that year, the engineer having made the necessary arrangements for the purpose of bringing vessels into the harbour, the Ruby, a beautiful yacht of 51 tons burthen, and drawing 9 feet water, belonging to the writer, entered the lake from the sea under full sail, with the colours flying, and having on board the chairman, Colonel Harvey, and other directors. She was followed by the Georgiana yacht, of 48 tons, and by several pleasure-boats and vessels of a smaller class. Some of the circumstances attending the junction of the salt and fresh waters in the first instance were remarkable. The salt water entered the lake with a strong under-current, the fresh water running out at the same time to the sea upon the surface. The fresh water of the lake was raised to the top by the eruption of the salt water beneath, and an immense quantity of yeast-like scum rose to the surface. The entire body of the water in the lake was elevated above its former level, and on putting a pole down, a strong under-current could be felt bearing it from the sea; and at a short distance from the lock next the lake, there was a perceptible and clearly defined line where the salt water and the fresh met, and upon this line salt water might have been taken up in one hand and fresh water in the other. Lake Lothing was thickly

studded with the bodies of pike, carp, perch, bream, roach, and dace; multitudes were carried into the ocean, and strewn afterwards upon the beach, most of them having been bitten in two by the dogfish, which abound in the bay. It is a singular fact that a pike of about 20 lb. in weight was taken up dead near the Mutford end of the lake, and on opening the stomach a herring was found in it entire. The waters of the lake exhibited the phosphorescent light peculiar to sea-water, on the second or third night of the opening."

CHAPTER XXV.

A WHITSUNTIDE CRUISE.

AN esteemed editor once very nearly rejected a most able article of ours because there was a lack of personal adventure in it, and we received a hint that, however trivial our own doings might seem to us, they were of interest to those to whom the Broad district and its attractions were strange. If this be so—and how can we doubt the accuracy of such a flattering supposition?—we need make no apology for the interpolation in this book of our own mild adventures and excitements in the way of cruises on these rivers.

We have often wondered why so few yachtsmen from a distance pay a visit to these Broads. For small yacht sailing the locality is unequalled. The three navigable rivers give about 150 miles of sailing. They all are broad and deep, and the rise and fall of the tides are not great. Yachts can be moored against the bank almost anywhere; and unless you moor near some yachting station, you will be alone in the midst of such a wilderness of water

and reeds, and in such solitude, as cannot be found elsewhere in England. The bleating of snipe, the song of the reed-wrens, the cry of the heron as he flies past, the splash of the small fish which a pike is pursuing, the rustling of the tall reeds in the wind, the lapping of the water against the yacht—these are the only sounds you will hear. What you will see are: miles of waving reeds and marsh-grasses, the white of meadow-sweet, the blue of forget-me-nots and loosestrife, the gold of iris and marsh-marigold, water-fowl of many kinds, windmills and church towers in plenty, but not many houses, white-sailed yachts or brown-sailed wherries sweeping by; and to close the day, the vast sunset effects peculiar to fenland and high mountains, where there is great space open to view.

It is easy and pleasant to take short cruises of just a day or two, with little expense and much profit, as the following account of a cruise one Whitsuntide will show.

The Coya lay at Cantley, and on Saturday evening we went there by train, laden with a goodly amount of eatables and drinkables. The boat lay in a dyke, safe and snug, and we stepped on board with the feeling of meeting an old friend, and with anticipations of a pleasant cruise. Soon everything was stowed away, and the yacht was clean and trim and ready. Now came the question as to how much sail she could stand, for it was blowing wildly from the north-east, and the wherries were rushing

by with close-reefed sails, and peaks lowered. A solitary yacht flew past with all her reefs down and her plankways hidden by the foaming water. We thought the Coya could stand up with two reefs down, and after some trouble her sail was set accordingly. In another minute she was flying along with the wind abeam, and the water up to the coamings of the well, her timoneer sitting *out of her* to windward with the tiller in one hand and the sheet in the other. In the next reach the wind was dead aft, and the boat was on an even keel, running very fast, and seeming to spring to the gusts which urged her along over a favourable tide. And now the river bends to the left, and the sheet has to be got in for a reach close-hauled, and the wind against tide has raised a lipper which sends showers of spray over us. No sloop or cutter could have worked to windward better than the Coya did here, notwithstanding the fact that her high cabin stopped her "shooting" when in stays so much as she would otherwise have done. The timoneer had to be careful here, for the gusts came sweeping down just when she was in stays as a rule, and directly she was about they would catch her as if they meant to take the mast out of her.

There was little time to notice the clumps of trees which sheltered picturesque houses here and there, the curious groups of house-boats and nets belonging to the eel-fishers, or the reed-birds which we disturbed each time we neared the bank. The wherries, tearing along with

the foam flying over their bows, were the objects of greatest interest ; for as we had to cross their bows frequently when tacking, it was a matter of timing and calculation to do it with safety. Now comes a free reach, with the wind almost dead aft, such is the sinuous course of the river.

Reedham Ferry is passed, and here is Reedham village, a cluster of red houses on the left bank, which is high and wooded. Under the lee of this we lie to and lower sail, having done the five miles in forty minutes, which would have been fewer if it had not been for the long reach we had to tack.

Before long everything was made snug, and the awning stretched over the well. Some soup was warming over the spirit-lamp, and the table in the cabin set. Dinner was leisurely enjoyed ; then a walk through the village, a glass of grog, and the hammock was slung, the lights put out, and the rushing of the tide past the boat and the sougling of the wind in the trees were lullabies to a sound sleep.

Next morning it was blowing as hard as ever, but the sky was blue and the sun hot, and the larks singing. Eggs and bacon are never so delicious as when cooked by one's self on board a boat, and coffee never so fragrant.

A friend came down by the morning train, and we were presently under way, fitful gusts between the houses driving us slowly against a strong incoming tide.

Once through Reedham railway-bridge, however, we caught the wind, and went bowling along at a fine pace.

We turned off from the main river into the New Cut, which leads perfectly straight in a south-easterly direction for three miles, until it joins the Waveney. With a fair wind, we went along this in capital style. Soon after we entered it, we saw a yacht come in from Yarmouth side, and gave chase. We soon made out that it was the Swallow, a handsome four-ton racing-boat. She had two reefs in her mainsail and a reefed jib, and she was lying over until it seemed a marvel that she could ever recover herself. At Haddiscoe is a lift-bridge, where a road crosses the Cut. We got out our horn and sounded some unmelodious blasts in order to bring out the porters to open the bridge, which they do just in time, and we slip through, depositing a toll of 1s. 6d. in a bag held out to us at the end of a pole.

With the wind abeam, the gusts come very heavy off the left bank, which is high and wooded, and very pretty. Our too slender mast bends like a whip as the squalls catch her, but we hold on, to try and keep ahead of the Swallow. At Somerleyton railway-bridge, which is three miles further, we have an opportunity of timing her as she passes through, and find she is a minute behind. In another mile we come to a reach where we have to beat, and the Swallow is soon at the same game in the same reach. Then we take a sharp bend to the right, and she begins to pick us up; and in a mile and a half her bowsprit is threatening our weather quarter, and, according to the rule of the road on these rivers, we have to make way

and allow her to pass to windward. If an overtaking boat can establish an overlap, she is entitled to this, as it is difficult to pass to leeward while blanketed by the sail of a yacht to windward.

We have now passed out of the Waveney and entered Oulton dyke, and another two miles bring us to the Broad (Oulton), with the Swallow a hundred yards ahead of us. We had done the distance—nine miles—in an hour and twenty minutes; and a mile of it was a dead beat to windward in a narrow channel. The Swallow, we find, did the eight miles from Yarmouth bridge to the end of the New Cut at Reedham, in an hour, and had the water over her cabin-top while going across Breydon. See how she careens over as the blasts strike her on her way across the lake, and how skilfully her timoneer luffs her up! Under our smaller canvas we do not feel them so much, but our water-ways are well covered, which is quite enough for a Una boat.

Oulton Broad is covered with yachts and sailing-boats from 20 tons downwards, and the scene is uncommonly lively. We sail about in search of a buoy, the use of which we have, and at last find it in the middle of the Broad, where it has been dragged by a yacht which hung on to it the night before, and proved too heavy for the weight attached. As it cannot now be moved, we take possession of an unoccupied buoy in the bight at the north end of the lake, and are glad to furl the sail and rest after the lively time we have had of it.

Yacht after yacht arrives on the Broad, for there are regattas on the two following days; and from seaward, through the lock which connects the Broad with Lake Lothing, Lowestoft harbour, and the sea, come luggers and sailing-boats, manned by smacksmen and sailor lads home for their Whitsuntide. We lounged about the rest of the day, and visited the boats of our acquaintances, of whom there are a goodly number here; and at night slept alone, our companion having gone back by train. The howling of the wind and the short see-saw of the yacht on the mimic waves awoke us several times during the night; and, when asleep, we dreamt that she was dragging her moorings, and drifting on to a lee shore. But she was doing nothing of the kind, although she was swinging so much that through the cabin-doors there was visible a changing panorama of half the Broad. Some water-fowl had apparently chosen the top of the cabin for a roosting-place, and left us to clean up after them.

After breakfast and washing up, there was a lounge until some friends came down to spend the day. The regatta was great fun. In the first match, which was for yachts of four tons, there were four entries; and, as the wind was blowing as hard as the day before, the sailing was very fine. In the next match, which was for open boats, there were nine entries, and the start was uncommonly pretty. But there was too much wind for them, and baling-out was carried on vigorously. A bobstay carried away by one, a mast by another, a third

nearly sinking with water she had shipped, thinned their numbers; but the race throughout was pluckily sailed. There are no centre-board boats which carry so much sail and are so fast as the Norfolk boats. Their bowsprits, outboard, are as long as themselves. During this race we got under way on board the Swallow, and had to keep our eyes open as we sailed about the Broad. Yachts and sailing-boats of all rigs were dashing about; but there was little to fear from the fresh-water boats, for they are in general so skilfully handled that you may be as crowded as vehicles in a London street, and shave through as closely as a hansom-cabby, without danger; but the sea-going craft were not used to so little elbow-room, and some of the luggers which were knocking about were doing so a little too literally. One 10-ton yacht, manned by fishermen, shoved her bowsprit through the side of another, and cut a small open boat down to the water's edge.

That night the doings on shore were very lively. The smacksmen, being drunk to a man, commenced to fight as well as they were able. That sometimes they could not see each other, very plainly was evidenced by the following. The second of one of the combatants, who was giving a knee, asked him if he could see his adversary. The man stared hard at his opponent, who was in a similar position only a few feet away, and replied, but rather doubtfully, "Ay, I can see him right plain." "Then go at him."

Whitsuntide is a saturnalia with the smacksmen, and the inns at Oulton are turned inside out and given over wholly to providing for the fishermen. Happily, however, there is a sensible diminution in the amount of drunkenness, owing to the hold the Salvation Army and the Blue Ribbon movement have taken among the seafaring population. Where formerly a man came home from the fishing with £30 or £40 in his pocket, and would go into a low pot-house and be eased of all his money before his "spree" was over, he now goes home sober and gives the money to his wife. The takings of the public-houses have been marvellously reduced since these movements took place; and bearing this in mind, we always refrain from grumbling at the great noise and inconvenient zeal which offend the nice senses of our Pharisaic selves. We even forgive the Army the following indignity offered to us when we were rowing one Sunday evening to our yacht, which was moored in Lowestoft harbour. The Army stopped on the bridge, and sang at us, the refrain being, as we understood it—"See those sinners in the boat! See those sinners in the boat!"

The humours of Oulton at regatta-time are manifold. Chief among its *habitués* is "the man who laughed under water." On one occasion he and a friend got into a jolly together, and the friend sitting on one gunwale, "the man," &c., had to sit on the other to balance him. The friend toppled over, and the balance being thus rudely disturbed, "the man," &c., went to the bottom too; and it is stoutly affirmed by several credible persons

who were near, that they heard him roaring with laughter while he was under water. It was this gentleman's father who had a very stentorian voice; and on one occasion when inquiries as to his whereabouts were being made of a waterman, the man put his hand to his ear, listened awhile, and then curtly answered, "He ain't within a mile."

The air of the Broad has a peculiar effect upon many persons at regatta-time, particularly in the evening. It is probable, indeed, that the rapid movements of the numerous craft make people giddy. One night we had retired to rest early—twelve o'clock say, leaving a party of friends on board a steam-launch about twenty yards off. Later on we were awakened by a conversation between some persons who were alongside in their jolly, and were debating what practical joke they could play upon us. They were unable to agree, and rowed away upbraiding each other. Later still there was a further disturbance. Two young gentlemen in a jolly had mistaken our boat for theirs, and were arguing the matter painstakingly but indistinctly. Suddenly there was a loud splash, and rushing out in our night-gear, we found that the argument had resulted in a capsize. Matters were soon put right; but the curious thing was, that several men who were standing on the deck of the launch, and apparently gazing at us in the bright moonlight, saw and heard nothing of the occurrence until the morning.

But we are wandering from our present cruise, and after this gossip must turn in.

On the Broad there were still the wild blasts of wind, and fitful gleams of moonlight showed all the yachts swaying to and fro, while lights from the cabin-windows told of snug comfort within. The morning broke as stormy as ever, but fine and bright overhead. There were more sailing-matches and a regatta of model yachts, for which, however, there was too much wind. At three o'clock, a friend having joined us, we made sail, and got under way in company with the Swallow. It was a ding-dong match as far as Somerleyton, first one and then the other being ahead. The wind and tide were both dead against us when we had to pass through Somerleyton Bridge, and the race of water through the piers was very strong. The Swallow and another yacht threw out ropes to the porters on the bridge, who hauled them out to the end of the swinging portion, and then they took a shove from a buttress, and a timely puff took them away. We did the same with a boat-hook instead of a rope, and then the wind fell, and with our close-reefed sail it was slow work beating away from the dangerous timber and iron work just behind us. At last we got out of the lea of the high bank, and went in chase of the Swallow, now far ahead. She came back to look for us, and then shot away again, and got to Reedham first. We came up while she was waiting for the bridge to be opened, but she left us again, until we shook out our reefs and passed her, getting to Cantley a little in advance, just as the wind had blown itself quite out.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BREYDON WATER.

BELOW the little water-side inn known as the "Berney Arms," the channel of the Yare narrows and the tide runs swiftly, and there the river meets with its sister from the pleasant vales of Suffolk, the clear-running Waveney. Together they expand into the fulness of Breydon Water, at the distant misty end of which rise the spires and towers of Yarmouth. When the tide is in, Breydon (the "broad end" of the rivers) is indeed a noble lake; but the parallel rows of posts down its mid-length tell of a channel that must be kept with great exactness, and of mud-flats dry on either side at low water. These mud-flats dry out to a much greater extent than formerly, owing to the completer ebb of the tide. There are two aspects of Breydon Water which always occur to us. One is soon after the dawn of a summer's morning. From the upper end, looking towards Yarmouth, the smoothly flowing tide, and the gleaming flats on either side, are silvered with the brightness of the coming day, and the last pink

and green of the sunrise are fading over the sea, between which and the water the red gables of the town seem but a slight barrier.

With the first of the flood a fleet of wherries are coming up, their sails just filled with the light air which in silky summer weather often follows the tide. Very graceful are the forms of those black high-peaked sails, and very busy is the sight when the change of tide lets loose the waiting craft. Towering above them, but lagging far behind, is a red-sailed topsail smack from the Medway, which is not so handy on these confined waters as on the Thames or Orwell. If the wind is fair, well and good; but if it is foul, then she anchors in mid-stream with great mooring-lines out to one shore, and waits until the wind blows fair again; while the wherries tack and quant or pole along, and make their passage by hook or by crook.

Hérons stand in the little runnels which trickle over the flats, and wait and watch for eels, and watch also the behaviour of the craft which are passing by. They will let an ordinary wherry, or even a yacht, pass very close to them, craning their necks to see them as they draw near; but if a man stands on the part of a wherry in front of the mast (where he would go if he had a gun in his hand), or if the crew of the yacht observe them too closely and hold up anything resembling a gun, away they go with little hesitation. Wheeling overhead in noisy parties, breakfast-hunting on the flats, are gulls and sea-fowl. Slowly the wherries pass the great posts, slowly the morning creeps

on, slowly and peacefully the white morning passes into the glowing noon; the lake fills up to its brim with the quiet waves, and slowly and peacefully the tide ebbs again, and the sun droops, and it is a lotus-eating afternoon.

Another time, and after a wild run across Breydon before a blustering north-wester, we have moored by Yarmouth quays, and looking back see a red sunset glaring luridly from black and jagged clouds as lava from a torn volcano. The water is churned into choppy waves, which catch the fire on their crests, and now and then a wherry comes driving down with her sail close-reefed and half lowered, and her bows hidden in foam. The wherries reach their haven; the night falls over the stormy lake, so wild, and weird, and uncanny in its solitude; and the throb of the surging tide and the howl of the unchecked wind keep us awake far into the night. In these two aspects Breydon has so often presented itself to us, that its intermediate moods have made less impression.

It is the playground of the aquatic portion of Yarmouth. Regattas and water frolics are held on its broad though deceitful bosom, and at such times it is gay indeed. Hourly in the summer-time, while daylight lasts, do fleet river-yachts add interest and life to its channel. In the winter, if any fowl fly over Yarmouth and make for Breydon, many gunners are on the alert, and the professional gunner and the sportsman bend all their energies to the destruction of those fowl. Breydon is certainly well shot over, and one constantly hears of rare birds being secured

there. Lately a young seal was shot on Breydon, but such excitements are rare. On the south bank, close to Yarmouth, are little shanties and boat-houses rented by yachtsmen and sportsmen, and it is in these that the greatest sport seems to us to be had, for the enthusiastic gunners sit and smoke, and fondle their big guns, and talk of what they have done and will do in a very pleasant and edifying way.

The gunning-punts in use here are strong buoyant craft, and the big gun is mounted on a stout stanchion without any rope breeching or springs to break the recoil. In a hard winter there are often fowl enough on the flats to afford some murderous shots with these big guns; but the last two winters have been far too mild, from the wild-fowling point of view. The preceding winters were as much too hard, for the feeding-places were all frozen up, and the majority of the fowl went farther south to the estuaries from Harwich to the Thames. Now and then wild swans visit Breydon, and rarely escape. Wild geese, too, often come there; and if any rare fowl come to Norfolk, Breydon flats allure them and Breydon gunners receive them. A winter with much snow but little severe frost, is the weather in which the fowl stay with us the longest.

Breydon Water is the Bay of Biscay to the small yachts and sailing-boats of the rivers. When a squall strikes them on the rivers, these over-canvassed little craft can be run up to the weather shore, and can hang there until

the storm is over. But on Breydon there are no friendly banks. The mud on each side of the channel must be avoided, particularly with a falling tide. The enormous jibs the boats carry will not allow them to lie to comfortably, and reefing under way is impossible with them ; so that if a good breeze strikes them on Breydon, there is a scene of confusion, a brave struggle against fate, and a usual result of driving on the mud and there lying for hours, perhaps all night. Occasionally there is a capsizing, but not often, for the yachts are stiff and well handled. A strong wind on Breydon has its excitements, and perilous passages across its stormy waters become matters of story and tradition. Once we ran on the mud, and stayed there for three long hours at an inconvenient angle. Many times have we tacked across with the lee side of the cabin-top under water at each tack, and many times have we listened to tales of far more exciting episodes. The navigation of the lower part of Breydon does, however, require great care. The river contracts to a narrow channel, which is spanned by Yarmouth bridge, and the ebb-tide, strengthened by the current of the river Bure, which here joins it on the north bank, rushes out with great force and speed. The mooring-places for all the yachts are not far above the bridge, and it may easily happen that a yacht sailing down to her berth, and losing the wind under the lee of the buildings, may drift down and be wrecked against the bridge. But we have never known this happen. The yachts are handled so well that they rarely "miss

their tip," but are brought round at the exact spot. If they do miss, then an anchor must be thrown out immediately, and occasionally some very narrow escapes are experienced.

It is curious to see the wherries come down with the tide. When they arrive at a particular point, down comes the sail, a long chain splashes overboard, and is allowed to trail along the bottom. The weight of this chain brings the wherry head to tide, and as she drops down she can be steered to whichever side she desires to go. If she is bound down through the bridge, the scene becomes exciting. The current through the middle arch is, particularly if there is much flood-water in the river, very fierce, and the fall is very apparent. With a chain out on each bow, her mast lowered, and perhaps a long line out ashore, she drops down stern first very slowly, her steersman casting anxious glances behind him at the arch. When she is exactly in the middle, and a little distance above the bridge, the shore-rope is cast off, her speed is accelerated, and then she shoots the bridge with great rapidity, the chains slipping more quickly over the stones, which are there thrown in to check the great scour of the tide on the soft mud and sand of the river bottom. A yacht uses a weight at the end of a rope instead of a chain; and a large vessel dredges down behind her anchor, the bridge being open to allow her masts to pass.

As Breydon is some 1200 acres in extent, and the deep-water channel is comparatively narrow, the mud-flats on

each side, which are covered twice a-day with the tide, offer rich feeding-grounds for fowl and for fish, and numbers of Yarmouth people get their living in whole or in part out of the Broad. In its deep mud eels abound ; and the eel-picker in his little punt, steadily spearing away at random, is a common object on the flats. If you watch him you will be surprised at the number of times he strikes without any result, and you will conclude that it is a very laborious occupation, earning but little profit ; but at times he may hit upon a " warm corner," and succeed in spearing a large quantity.

In the deeper water the dab-darters are often hard at work ; the dabs come up with the tide in great numbers, and the " dart " with which they are speared is like the head of a large rake with the teeth set vertically instead of horizontally. This is plunged in at random by one man, while his companion manages the boat. When a dab is struck, its struggles send a thrill up the long pole which is easily felt, and it is lifted aboard. At times large numbers of dabs and flounders are so caught.

Trawling for dabs, flounders, and other fish, is largely practised on Breydon. As many as half-a-dozen boats may be seen working down the channel with the tide, with their trawls down ; and some amateurs seek this sport in the same way, to the unconcealed disgust of the professional fisherman—but the amateurs as a rule considerately follow in the wake of the fishermen, and let the latter have first trawl.

It does not do to lower the nets immediately after the turn of the tide, as they would be choked by the silt and rubbish which pours off the flats at the first of the ebb in vast quantities.

Nets are also stretched on stakes along the flats to intercept the fish as they are swept back by the tide; and occasionally, when codlings of good size visit Breydon in large quantities, line-fishing is found to be productive. Then, in the season, and particularly at the upper end, the smelt-nets are hard at work, and the smelts shine brighter than any silver as they are drawn up entangled in the brown meshes. The floating huts of the fishermen hide in sheltered corners at the top of Breydon and on Burgh Flats (as the very shoal portion at the mouth of the Waveney is called), and in all its aspects Breydon gives evidence of being a happy hunting-ground for Yarmouth men.

It has many times been suggested that the mud-flats of Breydon should be drained and converted into good marsh and pasture. Such, however, might be a dangerous experiment, for at present it seems as though Breydon acted as a safety-valve for the tide, which must expend much of its force in filling the lake; and it might happen that if it were not for this room to expand, the incoming tide would have a greater effect than it has at present in flooding the marshes. So it is not probable that this resort will be lost to lovers of sport and of the picturesque. Another idea lately propounded by a pisciculturist was to make use of the flats as feeding-grounds for oysters,

and establish an oyster-fishery there. Whether this is practicable or not we do not know.

As an instance of the scour of the tide, a fisherman told us that he once cut a small canal about a foot deep and three feet wide through the mud from the channel to the bank near his cottage, a distance of about 100 yards, so that he might get ashore at low water without wading through the mud. In three weeks, such was the action of the tide, the depth was 6 feet, and now it is 17 feet, with a proportionate width. And as men win immortality by various means, he is proud that it is now called by his name—Calver's drain.

The shores of Breydon are flat and uninteresting, with a strong bank keeping back the water, and without reeds or trees. No one ever seems to walk along them except at regatta-times, when the keen-eyed watermen assemble readily enough, and take the greatest interest in the races and the competing yachts.

The regattas and water frolics are, however, not so gay nowadays as they were in times past, when the Mayors of Norwich and Yarmouth annually went in July in their state barges and met at Hardley Cross, proceeding afterwards to Breydon and joining the floating fair.

The still massive ruins of the Roman fortress of Burgh Castle command the water from the southern bank near the mouth of the Waveney. There are walls and towers of exceptional solidity, and the space enclosed within them is more than four acres. The curious thing is, that while

there are massive walls on three sides, on the fourth no wall seems to have been built. This apparently unprotected side is the one next the marsh, and antiquarians conjecture that the old estuary or the morass must have been sufficient defence. An hour or two's ramble over the ruins is of the greatest interest, even to those who have no antiquarian knowledge.

CHAPTER XXVII.

GREAT YARMOUTH.

AFTER passing through Yarmouth Bridge, the united current of the three rivers turns to the southward, and runs almost parallel to the coast for three miles, until it debouches into the sea at Gorleston. The mouth of the river has been gradually forced southward by the action of the sea. Yarmouth lies on the spit of land between the river and the sea. It is quite clear that within the limits of history the sea flowed much further inland, so that Norwich was a port even if the sea did not actually reach it. Then as the sea receded, a sand-bank arose at the mouth of the estuary, which, as it grew larger and firmer, became the resort of the Dutch and English fishermen. As the land grew in size, houses were built and a town formed, which, being so conveniently situated, grew rapidly in importance, always dependent, however, upon its possessing a haven for the fisherman,—and great straits the inhabitants were put to to preserve the haven. Time after time the shifting sand and shingle broke before the rage

of tempest, or the channel became choked up. The tale of their struggles is most interesting, but hardly comes within the scope of this book.

In the seventeenth century the herring trade declined because of the badness of the harbour, and the Yarmouth folk petitioned James I. to grant them a part of the lead and other useful materials of "that vast and altogether useless cathedral at Norwich," to enable them to repair their piers.

This indicates the jealousy which has always existed between Yarmouth and Norwich. The newer town supplanted the older as a port, and usurped its privileges. In the thirteenth century the citizens of Norwich sued the burgesses of Yarmouth for not permitting their ships (or keels) to come laden with their goods and merchandise to the city, as they always did in times past, before Yarmouth was.—(Blomfield.)

The haven now possessed by Yarmouth gives much trouble and costs much money to keep it of sufficient depth. In the sixteenth century a sand-bank grew into an island at Scroby, a little to the northward of Yarmouth; and while contention was rife for its possession, it was swept away by the sea. On a coast so unstable as this, Yarmouth can scarcely consider her present haven to be absolutely permanent, although it has now endured for many years.

To those who are alike fond of the sea and its associations, and the picturesque on land, a stroll through Yar-

mouth is deeply interesting. It is a semi-Dutch town in many respects, and as quaint in its older parts as any over the water, although not so clean. The old town had no streets proper; the quay was on one side, and the sand-denes on the other. Between them the houses were built as thickly as they could be crowded, and for communication narrow alleys were ruled across at equal distances. These alleys are called rows, and there are 145 of them now existing. If you were to lay a ladder on the ground, and suppose one side to be the river and the other the sea, the rounds would represent the rows, except that the latter are by comparison closer together. When a stranger dives into these rows, he always feels glad to emerge at the other end, they seem so much like traps. Yet many of them are traversed by wheeled conveyances called trollies—long, very narrow two-wheeled carts, which are of course designed especially to pass through the rows. The front doors of the houses open upon the rows, and many of them are large and comfortable, while all which have not been converted into shops are quaint.

But in Yarmouth it is the busy river which attracts us. Coasters, steamers, and fishing-smacks jostle for room by the quay, and with the tide a fleet of shrimping-boats is coming in, their masts lowered to an angle of about 45 degrees in order to pass under the bridge. Steerage-way is kept on them by the aid of a sweep; and borne by the tide, they drive swiftly along through the bridge, and up to the mouth of the Bure, where they moor and unload.

It is of course in the fishing season when the Yarmouth quays present their most interesting aspects. As the boats come in one after another laden with fish, and edge in to unload at the quays, the dexterity with which they are handled is wonderful, especially considering that the crews of the Yarmouth smacks are rather mixed, consisting perhaps of men who only ship for the fishing season, and work on the land for the rest of the year. The Scotch crews are a superior class of men, sober and quiet—a great contrast to the Yarmouth men. Their boats are brought from far-distant Scotch ports, and are small craft to come so far—broad in the beam and shallow, with stem and stern alike, and rigged with a lug foresail and mizzen.

Some of the Yarmouth traders own large fleets of smacks, which have an admiral, and obey his rough-and-ready discipline.

It is a fine sight to see scores of sails all speeding for the harbour, and a finer, because of the number, when a fine day comes after a spell of storm, and all the boats which have been detained in port set sail at once. We have counted a hundred and fifty all so close together that they were almost touching drifting out of the harbour at once.

One afternoon last November, we were at Yarmouth while a heavy gale was raging. All the way down to Gorleston Pier there was evidence of the severity of the storm, which had come on suddenly and surprised the

boats at the fishing. Split sails and broken spars were plentiful among the vessels which lay by the wharves. People were hurrying with anxious faces to the pier, and groups of women were silently watching the boats arrive. As we reached the pier, the first thing we saw was a smack being towed up with full fifty men at the hawser. The gale was from the west, and dead against a vessel attempting to enter. The tide was running out with great violence; the fall in the level from one point to another was easily discernible. With all their strength the men could only tow the smack at a snail's pace against wind and tide. They would halt perforce for a second or two, and then with an effort proceed a few yards, and so on until they reached the northerly bend of the river, which enabled the smack to hoist her jib and run up stream. Joining the crowd at the end of the pier, we watched a Scotch lugger making for the harbour. Her mainsail only was set, and was close-reefed, and she was evidently heavily laden with fish—the herrings gleaming in the folds of the net, which lay on the deck, where it had hurriedly been hauled in when the gale broke. It was a fine sight to see how the little craft rode over the heavy seas which every now and then smothered her in foam. She could make the harbour mouth, but no further, by the aid of the wind; and as she dashed close up to the south pier a coil of light rope was hurled by a strong arm, and fell on the deck, where the end was immediately seized, and bent to the end of a stout warp, which was

quickly hauled on shore, and then manned by a score of stout fellows, who succeeded in towing her up. The next lugger was not so well found in ropes. The first she sent ashore broke, and her anchor was at once dropped. A second rope also broke, and then she had drifted back too far, and back she went to the extreme length of her cable, and lay tossing about in the most awful manner, just clear of the north pier. A third Scotch boat failed in the same way, and she drifted out into the Roads, and there anchored. The fourth broke her ropes, and having dropped her anchor, drove alongside the other by the north pier, and her crew managed to scramble out of her. Then a fine Yarmouth smack missed the rope thrown to her, and drove across the river and against the north pier, at once losing her bowsprit, and her sail blowing to tatters. Her crew got rope after rope out to try and hold her; but they snapped like threads, and her anchor being down, she drove to the same position as the two others. At every moment it seemed that the smacks must cut each other down. The Scotch crew which had landed did a plucky thing. They managed to scramble on board again, and slipping their cable, got under way, and ran to the northward, probably with a view of beaching their boat at Winterton, where the sea would be smooth, or have been sheltered from the gale, which had commenced in the south and veered to the west. It was now getting dark; we were wet through with the rain, and it seemed not unlikely that some one would be blown into the water,

the wind was so fierce, and we walked homeward. It was a pitiful sight to see at least a score of smacks riding at anchor in the Roads, waiting for the tide to turn, when there would be a chance of gaining safety; the spindrift hid them every minute, and it appeared impossible that they could live for many hours in such a boil. To add to the cruelty of the scene, the flood-tide did not make into the harbour for three hours after it was due. As we struggled homeward against the gale, we could see on one of the sands, a mile or so out, the flares of a ship in distress. Those bright lights were lit by men in the embrace of death, for the vessel was lost with all hands. A little later than this there was such a scene of wreck and disaster at Lowestoft that it cannot be related, now that the excitement has passed away; and the only reason it and the gale just alluded to are here mentioned, is to show how defective as harbours of refuge both Yarmouth and Lowestoft are, and what a need there is for a noble effort to establish a sufficient harbour of refuge on the east coast. Would that we had the eloquence to move men to undertake such a scheme, and to awake the public to a sense of its pressing necessity! If you look at the 'Wreck Chart,' which is annually published, you will see that by far the greatest number of wrecks are off the Norfolk and Suffolk coast.

The fishing-boats pay great attention to the storm-warnings which are hoisted; but as it often happens that the morning of the day on which a storm is expected is

fine, many boats go out on the chance of getting back again before the gale breaks, but are perhaps caught, and lose gear, if not boat or life. The Scotch boats do not go out fishing on Sunday, and are none the poorer for the loss of the day's work.

It is not within the province of a book on the Broads to tell of the deeds of Yarmouth and Lowestoft beachmen in the long swift yawls with which they proceed to the assistance of vessels which are in distress; but whether it is for reward of salvage, or for saving of life, the companies of beachmen render true and noble service; and for any one in search of a subject, here is good material which might well be gathered together for the public ear.

But to return to the rivers. Yarmouth has jurisdiction on the Yare up to Hardley Cross, and on the Bure up to Weybridge or Acle Bridge, and in former times she used to control the movements of the river fishermen, as appears by the following extract from 'A Booke of the Foundation and Antiquitye of the Town of G^t Yarmouthe,' reputed to be written by one Henry Manship, merchant, in the time of Queen Elizabeth. The extract as it follows was taken from the edition brought out by Charles John Palmer, Esq. of Yarmouth, in 1847:—

"Certen ele settes.—In the three rivers meeting and flowing into the sea at Great Yarmouth—namely, the Yare, the Waveney, and the Bure, there were thirty-eight 'setts' or stations for fishermen, which were yearly, 'on Monday next after St Barnaby,' granted by the bailiffs

of Yarmouth to several fishermen, to be used during the following year, on paying the nominal rent of one penny.

“In 1576 Queen Elizabeth sent a letter to her ‘trustie and well-beloved baylifes’ of Yarmouth, informing them that her ‘well-beloved servant John Everist, one of the ordynarye yeomen of her chamber,’ who, on the recommendation of the Queen and Lord Burleigh, had been appointed water bailiff in the preceding year, was desirous of hiring ‘the seid fishinge places or settes’ at a rental of thirty pounds a-year, he promising that the market should for the future be better served with ‘all soch fishe as usually are tacon in the seid settes ;’ wherefore the Queen, ‘consideringe the reasonablenes of his sute, and the honestye of the man,’ required the bailiffs to grant him ‘a good and sufficient lease ;’ and promising if they did so, not to forget the bailiffs ‘in any reasonable sute’ to be made by them.

“The bailiffs, ‘according to their special dutie,’ complied and granted the lease, but soon got into trouble ; for Mr Clement Paston and Mr William Paston, who were then the great owners of the adjoining lands and marshes, ‘anymated the fishermen of the fresh ryvers’ to resist, whereby the bailiffs ‘could not quyetlie injoye their owne ;’ and the justices of assize, ‘having no leisure’ to end the dispute, as was ‘the desier and sute of all parties,’ and Mr Paston continuing the ‘disturbance’ to the ‘greate hynderance of the said towne, and to the manyfeste and contemptuous impechement’ of her Ma-

jesty's gracious purpose, the bailiffs being, like wise men, 'lothe to be inforced to spend in sutes that poore substance which they daylie must spend about their haven,' petitioned the Queen to command Mr Paston to appear before the Privy Council to answer for his conduct.

"Mr Paston, in his defence, alleged that the fishermen frequenting these rivers had 'an onlye custome among them, used tyme out of mynd, that yerlie, on the day of S. Margaret, every fysherman that could that daye, after rysenge, first come to anye of the said ele settes in anye of the said ryvers, and there staye and pytche a bowghe at the said ele sett, the same fysherman should have and injoye the same ele sett that yere, without yealdinge or payenge anye thinge for the same;' but that contentions having arisen among the fishermen as to 'gettinge of the best else settes,' it had been decided by the justices of assize, upon suit made to them by the bailiffs of Yarmouth, that, for the sake of 'good reule and order,' the fishermen should yearly 'resorte to the towne of Greate Yarmouth, and there payenge to the Bailies for the tyme beinge onne peny for recordinge the name of the fysherman and the ele sett, the saide fysherman should so injoye the same sett without further trouble.' That the bailiffs had 'latelie devysed to procuer unto themselves a greate yerelie renewe of the same ele setts; and the better to gett unto themselves an intereste to the said ele settes againste all righte and lawe, and to take awaye the whole lyvenge of the poor fyshermen,' had 'practised' with the said John

Everest to obtain her Majesty's letter, under the pretence of obeying which, the better to 'wynne and gette unto themselves this greate yearlie rente,' thinking that the poor fishermen 'woulde not withstand the same,' although they had 'about a yere paste exhibited a bill of complaynt to the Honorable the Lorde Keper agaynste the saide Baylies concerning such injuries and wrongs as had been offered by the said Balyfes against them.' That they and other gentlemen, 'having growndes nexte adjoining to the saide ryvers,' had taken the part of the fishermen, 'by whose continuall industrye and travell the cite of Norwiche and the countye of Norf. and Suff. had bene plentifullie provided in their kyndes of fyshe in the comon marketts, and for reasonable pryces;' and denying the allegations of the bailiffs, which they said did 'tuche them verye nighe both in dutie and obedience, a matter very grevous unto them,' beseeched her Majesty to refer the questions to the Court of Chancery.

"The Great Seal was then held by Sir Nicholas Bacon, who died in February 1579.

"It does not appear that the right of the bailiffs to grant the disputed lease was sustained, although their 'conservancy' of these rivers for the space of ten miles upwards was established.

"The custom of collecting the pence of the fishermen was discussed, and the rivers are now free to any fishermen using lawful nets."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HERRING-FISHERY.

If it is a true saying that one-half the world does not know how the other half lives, it is also true that the said one-half is in a great measure ignorant how it itself lives. It exists by eating and drinking of course, but of how its food-supplies are furnished and maintained it is in a large degree ignorant. Oxen and sheep are killed for beef and mutton, and fish are caught in the sea and rivers, and that is the sum of our knowledge. The prosperity of Yarmouth depends largely upon a very important branch of food-supply—the herring; and the town can hardly be passed by without some mention of the industry which is so intimately associated with it. The economic aspect of the subject is strange to us, and we have in this chapter availed ourselves of the information given in an excellent monograph, 'The Herring and the Herring-Fishery,' written by Mr J. W. de Caux, an able and practical man. The paragraphs within quotation marks are from this little treatise.

The sea-fishery around the coasts of this island is carried on by no less than 30,000 vessels, of which by far the greater number is composed of herring-boats; and the capital employed is, taking into account the rapid depreciation in boats and stores, sufficient for the farming of 6,000,000 acres of land. This fishing fleet is manned by 105,000 men and boys, and a corresponding number are engaged on shore in connection with the fisheries. Altogether, including the families of these men, it is estimated that 750,000 people depend directly upon the sea-fisheries for their livelihood; while, as to the money put into circulation, over £2200 is paid every season for counting the herrings landed at Great Yarmouth, and £370 for loading them on to the carts in attendance.

Herrings are caught by means of nets, which are shot in the sea and allowed to float in long lines, the bottoms of the nets weighted by leads, and the tops supported on the surface by floats. The fish, while swimming about in shoals, run against the nets and put their heads through the meshes, when the twine hitches behind the gills and the fish cannot withdraw. The meshes are square instead of diamond-shaped, in order that the net may hang open in the water. Each net is about 20 yards long, and each boat carries from 100 to 200 nets. These are fastened end to end, and reach from one to two miles, the boat riding at the end. The French use larger boats, and shoot as much as three miles of nets. In the autumn "there are frequently from 8000 to 10,000 miles of nets in the North

Sea at one time, and I am sure I am well within the mark when I say that the herring-nets belonging to the fishermen of Scotland and England alone would, if placed end to end, considerably more than encircle the entire globe."

Like other fish, herrings swim with their heads to the current, but at slack water they swim in circles with the sun.

The darker the night or the thicker the water, the more likely the herrings are to strike the net; and when the sea is phosphorescent, and the meshes of the net gleam like silver lines, the herrings will dart back.

Herring-fishers are not without their superstitions. "Occasionally herrings are caught, the fins of which are tinged with a beautiful bright red colour, while their bodies are suffused with a shadowy golden haze. By the Scotch fishermen these herrings are known as 'wine-drinkers,' by the fishermen along the coasts of Norfolk and Lincolnshire they are called 'loaders,' whilst by the west-country fishermen they are honoured with the appellation of 'kings and queens.' Fishermen look upon these herrings as omens of success; and as soon as one is perceived it is taken from the net, carefully prevented from touching anything that is made of wood, and at once passed round the 'scudding-pole' as many times as the fishermen desire to get lasts of herrings at their next haul."

If the "kings and queens" are taken alive, they are returned to the water after having been passed round the scudding-pole.

Herrings swim in vast shoals; but the motives which induce these shoals to move about or migrate, according to the seasons, seem to be quite unknown. Mr De Caux thinks that they go from deep to shallow water, according to the temperature; and further, that as certain varieties are found in certain localities only, this is a proof that their migrations do not extend to any great distance.

The spawning of the herring is still shrouded in mystery. Our author thinks that it must spawn very frequently to keep up its numbers, in the face of the enormous destruction to which it is subject at the hands of man, birds, and fish,—a destruction which is estimated at 120,000 millions of herrings in a year.

An interesting account of the rise of Yarmouth on the sand-bank at the mouth of the Yare, and its progress side by side with the herring-fishery, is given, and the great antiquity of herring-fishing and herring-curing fully established.

The Dutch have hitherto been the great rivals of the Yarmouth folk; but the Scotch are now the greatest herring-fishers in the world, possessing 14,500 herring-boats, and catching, in 1880, on their own coasts, 767,500,000 herrings, of the value of £1,000,000.

The herring-fishery “is a huge lottery, as one boat may catch an enormous number of herrings, whilst another boat may capture comparatively few.” And also, “There have been occasions when the herrings have been struck in such immense quantities, that the weight of them in

the nets has been so great that the warp-rope has been broken, and both herrings and gear, the latter alone amounting in value to between £300 and £400, have been irredeemably lost."

Herrings are sold by the "last," which contains 13,200 herrings. The far-famed Yarmouth bloaters are cured by being sprinkled with salt, and slightly dried in the smoke of burning oak-billets. The curing establishments at Yarmouth are very spacious, and perfect in their arrangements; but no improvements are made, or can be made, apparently, in the principles on which the fish are cured.

Herrings die quickly, and there is no unnecessary cruelty attending their capture; but the following has an unpleasant sound: "All prime edible fish are gutted alive as soon as they are caught, in order that they may keep the better; and when the knife is being used upon them they writhe convulsively, but make no noise whatever."

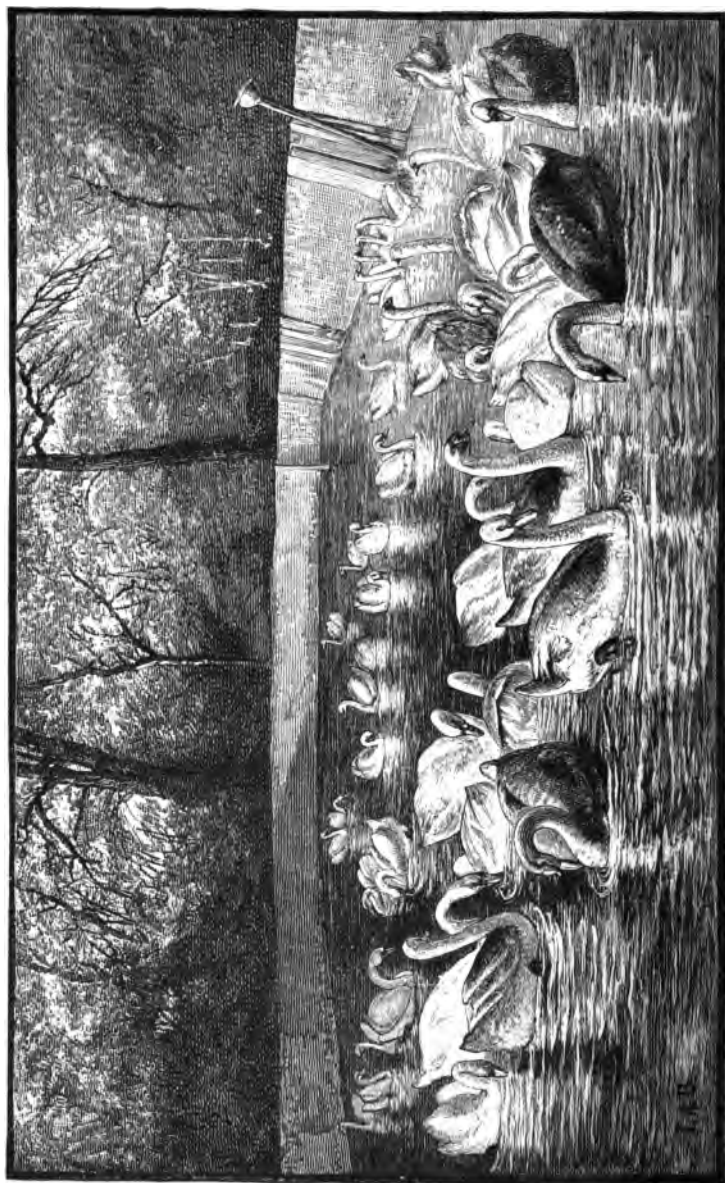
Mr De Caux pays a just tribute to the fishermen, who, though rough and uncultured, are sagacious, excellent pilots, daring navigators, strong and courageous. When next enjoying your bloater at breakfast, bestow a thought upon the men who, at possible danger to themselves, have provided you with the dainty relish.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SWANS.

ANGLERS and artists are at odds on the subject of swans. The former say that they damage the fishing by eating the spawn. No doubt the stately creatures do enjoy the succulent festoons of fresh eggs which cover the weeds, but not in sufficient quantities to really affect the fishing,—for swans are not very numerous on the Yare, while on the other rivers they are scanty indeed. The “point” which the white graceful form of the bird gives to a lily-covered, reed-encircled pool, is of so much value to the scene in an artistic sense, that we wish the swans were more numerous on the Broad. Rabid anglers desire the destruction of swans, eel-sets, wherries, yachts, and everything else which claims a share of the “water-privilege”; but may it be long before such destruction happens.

In the breeding season, each pair of swans takes possession of a particular portion of the river, and will not permit any intrusion on the part of other swans, and hardly even on the part of human beings if they are open to at-



SWAN-PIT, NORWICH.

on the upper or lower mandible, or both, of the swan. The Norwich Corporation possess a MS. copy of a very curious book, giving the different swan-marks in Norfolk and Norwich. The necks and heads of the swans are drawn on vellum, and the "nicks" or marks in the beaks show an ingenious variety of triangles, semicircles, and spots. This privilege of swan-mark was a heritable property, which was assignable by deed of bargain and sale, and title to it was set out by abstract in proper legal fashion.

In the summer, when the cygnets are sufficiently grown, the swan-upping takes place, when the cygnets are taken up and marked. The birds are remorselessly chevied by men in boats until they are secured, and tied together. Careful note is taken of the marks on the bills of the parent birds; and if, as is probable, they belong to different owners, the brood of cygnets is equally divided: if there is an odd one, it is tossed for.

The cygnets taken up on the Yare are removed to a very curious place, which is well worth a visit. This is the swan-pit, at the back of the Old Man's Hospital, St Helen's, Norwich. This pit is an oblong pool or tank, about 40 yards long by 15 broad, with perpendicular sides. The water is connected with the river, and rises and falls with the tide. In this pool you will see, in the autumn, some seventy cygnets, and a most interesting sight it is. Here they are fattened for the table, or reared for transmission to their future homes. Around three sides of the

pool are floating troughs, into which barley is poured down a long pipe with a funnel top. In addition to the barley, they are supplied with cut grass, of which they are very fond ; and if you throw a handful in the water at one end, they will race eagerly towards it. They crowd up to the troughs at feeding-time, and their long necks twist in and out, and get entangled into such queer knots that you fear they will choke themselves.

As a rule, they live peaceably together ; but if one bird is ill or weakly, the others attack it at every opportunity, —thus evincing that singular instinct which leads wild creatures to destroy the weak ones among them.

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CHAPTER XXX.

THE OTTER.

THE Broad district is not so rich in wild animals as a drier and more thickly wooded country would be. The only one worth our notice now is the otter, which is very numerous, although not often seen, on account of the pathless forests of reeds, which afford it ample scope for unseen rambles. Once, in an alder-car, a friend of ours came upon three together, and shot them all. Frequently, when lying awake at night on board a yacht, we have heard its bell-like bark close by us, and in the morning have found some large bream lying half eaten on the adjacent rond. Formerly, as may well be imagined, they were much more abundant; and in the year 1557, the "Norwich Assembly, for the fresh-water fishermen between the Tower of Conisford and Hardley Cross," made a regulation, "That every man shall be bound to keep a dog to hunt the otter, and to make a general hunt twice or thrice in the year, or more, at time or times convenient, upon pain to forfeit 10s." And in 1729 we read in the 'Norwich Gazette' that, between the

18th March and the 20th of May of that year, certain Suffolk gentlemen killed seventeen brace of otters by hunting them. The usual breeding-place of the otter is in some hole beneath tree-roots or rocks, on the margin of the water ; but as such spots are rare on the Broads, the otter accommodates itself to circumstances, and builds its nest in a reed-bed on the ground, raising a hillock of weeds and rubbish as big as a hay-cock, in the centre of which is a chamber, approached by two or more entrances. The otter is often caught in the large bow-nets which the Broadmen set for tench in the "runs" between the weeds. Otter-hunting with dogs in the lower reaches and Broads would be useless, as the extent of water is so great that the otter would have a great advantage over the dogs, and the hunter could not follow dogs and otters into the reed-beds.

In the upper waters, where their tracks can be traced on sand and mud banks, it is good fun to watch for the night marauders at some shallow ford which they must pass. Here is a sketch of how we shot an otter :—

One day, when coming home from a morning's fishing, we saw the keeper examining something upon the bank.

"Well, Wilson, what have you got there?"

"Here's a large carp, nigh 6 lb. in weight, with the otter's bite just taken out of his shoulder. There's a sight of otters up here, and they wander up and down the rivers for miles in the night."

"Well, why not watch for them at the ford at night, as we did last year?"

"Well, it is a nice evening, and the moon will soon rise. Would you like to watch with me to-night, sir?"

"I should; and I will come down about ten o'clock, and meet you at the ford."

At ten o'clock we took our greatcoat and a rug and gun down to the ford. Here the river was very shallow, as it rippled over a wide gravelly stretch. Any otter passing up or down the river must pass over this shallow, or along the strip of meadow on its margin. There was a clump of furze-bushes growing about twenty yards from the water, and in this we secreted ourselves, just as the moon rose, large and ruddy, over the coppice-top.

The daylight seemed loath to depart, and the moonlight, mingling with it, made every object clearly visible. The evening was chilly enough, although it was June; and we wrapped the rug around our legs, and the keeper fetched some armfuls of straw to aid in keeping in the warmth. There was no mist rising from the water, and everything was still and quiet. Now and then there was the rustle of a rabbit in the underwood behind us, and several came out to feed within shot; a belated wood-pigeon swept over, and made a clatter among the trees; a fox trotted over the meadow until it got our wind, and then sped quickly back to the wood; and large bats circled overhead, snapping up some big beetle-like insects which were about in great numbers. For two hours we waited in silence, barely exchanging a whisper.

"I must get up and stretch my legs," the writer was

about to say, when he saw the keeper make a slight movement, as if suddenly on the alert. We looked too, and there in the middle of the ford was an otter, standing up, and evidently looking around. How he got there without our seeing him we could not imagine ; but why he stopped there was explained by the ghostly form of a heron, which came lolloping along a few yards above the ground, and had attracted the otter's attention. All this, however, was momentary. We looked down the barrels, and pressed the trigger ; and as the dazzling effect of the flash passed away, we saw that the otter was killed, and the stream was slowly rolling his body over and over, when the keeper waded in and intercepted it. But what an uproar the sound of the shot caused ! The wood-pigeons flew from the coppice with an extraordinary rattle of wings, the rooks sent up a chorus of startled caws, and every rabbit dashed headlong through the rustling grass.

When one is sleeping alone in a little cabin in some lonely spot, one's sense of hearing becomes very acute ; and as one often lies awake at such times, every unusual noise attracts attention. We know by this time every noise that can proceed from a legitimate source on a Broad, from the rushing by of a belated wherry to the roll of a fat tench in the reeds ; and from the frequency with which we have heard the peculiar cry of the otter, and have afterwards found the half-eaten remains of a large fish on the rond, they still must be pretty plentiful. One night, while lying moored to the bank at Cantley, we were

awakened from a light sleep by the noise of something jumping on board. That it was a heavy object was apparent by the rocking of the boat; that it was not a dog was clear from its gait as it ran over the cabin-top, jumped on to the seat, and then to the floor of the well. The disturbance was so sudden and inexplicable that our sensations were not agreeable, and, to put an end to them, we dashed open the door just in time to see a large dark object plunge overboard and disappear. On striking a light, the broad and unmistakable track of an otter was visible, imprinted wherever his moist feet had been,—and that seemed to be everywhere, for he had evidently made round in search of something eatable. That they are not afraid of boats is evident; for, while lying against the Malthouse Staithe on Oulton Broad, we heard an otter in the night close by, and in the morning found a bream that would have weighed 6 lb. lying on the bank within ten yards of us, with its shoulder eaten away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ABOUT EELS.

ONE of the differences between the South Briton and the North Briton is, that the former loves eels (to eat), and the latter loathes them. Of the reason of this diversity of taste it is not now our intention to speak, although it is a curious byway of a curious subject. The eel has puzzled many naturalists, and is destined to puzzle many more. A short time ago, eels and eel-netting engrossed the attention of anglers and naturalists in the eastern counties; and not only there, but generally that of anglers on the southern rivers. Eel-sets in the East Anglian rivers are nets set athwart the stream for the purpose of catching a certain species of eel in its autumnal migration to the sea; and for many years there has been a growing dislike to them in the minds of anglers. Up to the present time there has also been a profound ignorance as to the mode of setting and working these sets, even among persons who have passed their lives upon the rivers. This ignorance induced a suspicion that the nets

are destructive to other fish than eels; and this suspicion became a certainty in the minds of many, if not the majority, of anglers. A "salt-tide" on the 14th of October 1881 destroyed a great number of fish; and some persons, seeing the dead and dying fish in the river, jumped to the conclusion that the fish would have gone up the rivers on to the Broads to escape the salt water, had they not been prevented by the eel-sets, which, it was assumed, were set across the river on the occasion of the flow of the salt water; and this led to sensational and thoughtless statements in the local papers. An agitation was set afoot for the abolition of the sets. The writer having some acquaintance with the subject, and knowing that the eel-sets did not destroy other fish than eels, made it his business to stem the tide of prejudice and save the livelihood of a number of people. This he succeeded in doing; and a committee appointed to inquire into the matter reported that the eel-sets are in no way detrimental to other fresh-water fish.

Feeling ran very high on the matter at first; and so little did the public seem to know about eels and their capture, that it has been thought fit that the following should be written.

And first, as to the natural history and habits of the eel. Naturalists generally agree that there are at least three distinct sorts of eels indigenous to this country—namely, the sharp-nosed or silver-bellied eel, the grig or snig, and the broad-nosed eel.

The grig is a yellowish eel, with a projecting under-jaw; the broad-nosed eel is stated to be an uglier-looking eel, with a broader head, and, according to Pennell, fierce and voracious in its habits; while the silver-bellied eel is a firm, fine-flavoured eel, with a dark, almost black back, a silvery belly, and a fine sharp head. This is the eel which migrates seaward in the autumn, and is the eel by which the eel-setters live.

In the 'Angler Naturalist,' by Mr Pennell, the following letter from Mr Pinkerton is quoted :—

"But a grand distinction between the two species (the sharp-nosed and the broad-nosed eel) is, that the sharp-nosed species is a migratory fish, while the broad-nosed one is not. I admit that the latter has its summer and winter quarters, for eels are very susceptible of the effects of cold and electricity, and it wanders about a good deal at night in search of prey; but it does not migrate to the sea in large shoals as the sharp-nosed species usually does. It is about this time of the year—autumn—that the annual migration commences, the eels moving in the night, and always choosing a dark night for the purpose: a change of wind, a clap of thunder, a cloudy night becoming clear and starry, will at once stop the movement. I have frequently visited the great eel-fishery at Toome, on the Lower Bann, where from 50 to 60 tons of eels are annually caught in the migratory season. As many as 70,000 eels have been taken at this place in one night, all the sharp-nosed species, with the slight exception of perhaps a dozen broad-noses that have

been accidentally mixed up with the shoal. One night, in 1842, when I visited the Toome fishery, there were caught in round numbers 11,000 eels; and on this occasion there were only three broad-noses in the whole number. What becomes of the immense quantity of sharp-nosed eels that descend to the sea every season? Do they remain in the brackish waters of the estuaries, or do they return in small detachments at various periods? This is a problem still to be solved."

At Ballyshannon, on the Erne, the eel-fisheries are nearly as valuable as the salmon-fisheries; and on the Thames, Severn, and other rivers, the eels are intercepted in their descent by weirs or frameworks holding basket-work traps, called "eel-bucks."

No one has ever seen the eels returning; but in the spring of the year, in the Thames, Severn, and many other rivers, the young eels come up by millions, keeping close to the banks, and swimming in almost solid columns. They will surmount almost any obstacle, creeping, wherever there is any moisture, through grass, and over stones and timber. This "eel-fare" lasts several days; and the tiny elvers, something like darning-needles in size, used to be scooped out by the bucketful and applied to the land for manure, baked in cakes for men, or used as food for pigs, until an Act was passed prohibiting their destruction.

The English market is chiefly supplied with eels from Holland, but they are not of so good a flavour as the English eels. The late Mr Frank Buckland was of opinion

that the English eel-fisheries are not half developed, and we quite agree with him. There is an immense amount of food yearly lost for want of the knowledge to make it available, and the eel-fisheries ought to be strongly encouraged by all economists.

Norfolk rivers are different in their conditions from the Thames and Severn, and other rapid rivers where the fall is great, and the water is fresh everywhere except in the lowest reaches of all. In the Severn, for instance, there is no salt water until below Gloucester, and the shallow fords, clear deeps, locks, and weirs present obstacles to the ascent of the adult eels, or, at all events, give such opportunities of observing the return of the large eels, if it actually took place, that it may be taken as an absolute fact that the eels which have descended to the sea do not return. The ascent of the stream by the elvers, too, goes to prove that the procreation of the descending eels takes place either in the estuaries or the sea.

In the Norfolk rivers, however, their slowness, their almost unobservable fall, the evenness of their depth, breadth, and current, and the many miles upward to which the brackish water penetrates—all have their effect upon the habits of the eels they contain; and this difference must be taken into consideration in an inquiry into the subject.

Seeing that the life of the eel is really shrouded in mystery, and that naturalists can only rely upon the observations of those whose occupation is connected with

eel-catching, we need make no apology for stating the belief of one of the oldest and most successful of the Norfolk eel-setters. According to his experience there are four different sorts of eels.

1. The silvery-bellied eel or bed-eel. This is the most numerous of all the tribe in Norfolk rivers, and corresponds to the sharp-nosed eel. It has a blackish back and silvery belly, is firm to the feel, and the best to the taste of all the eels. It is the one by which the eel-setter makes his living, as it is this species which in the autumn migrates seawards in immense numbers. It is rarely caught in any other way than by the eel-nets. It is only occasionally that it takes the "bab" (the bunch of worms strung on worsted with which the eel-babber works). It is seldom or never taken by an eel-spear, or by the bait of an angler; and when it is on the run, few eels of the other species are taken in the nets. Sooner or later the silver-bellied eels go down the river seaward. Each year, about harvest-time, a certain proportion of the eels seem to swarm off like bees, and make for the sea. They go down in bodies on dark nights, refusing to stir when the moon is up; they also seem to move more on the wane of the moon than when it is waxing. An atmospheric disturbance, such as wind and heavy rain, will start them off; but a change in the conditions under which they started will stop them. They also go down with the ebb-tide, and stop running when the tide flows. Big and little, old and young, start on this singular voyage, and big

and little, old and young, remain and "bed" themselves. Thousands of bubbles rising to the surface show where they work down into the soft mud, far beyond the reach of eel picks and darts. This bedding is to escape the cold of winter, to which eels are very sensitive, and is easily intelligible. But why do they migrate? For one reason, the brackish water of estuaries and harbours is warmer than either sea or river. The admixture of fluids of different densities causes a rising of the temperature, and fresh and salt water are daily mixed by the tides, and lessen the cold. Thus, while some eels prefer to seek the warmth of the mud, others seek heat in brackish water. But sooner or later all the eels of this species go down to the sea, and none of those that go down return. This is spoken to so positively by all eel-fishers that it cannot be doubted; and in such rivers as the Severn, there is no room for doubt, because of the facilities there are for observation. Then how is the supply kept up? and how is it that eels are always found in the rivers of a large size? The answer to the first part of the question is, that young ones are produced; and the answer to the other part is, that eels are so numerous, that although immense numbers leave the rivers each year, yet equally immense numbers remain. Now comes the curious part of it, so far as Norfolk rivers are concerned. In other rivers the procreation takes place largely in the estuaries or sea, and the elvers return to stock the rivers. In the lower part of the Norfolk rivers the elvers are not noticed

in spring, or any other time of the year; and so continually are the eelmen on the river, night and day, that such a phenomenon could hardly easily escape their attention. Neither could they fail to detect the return of the old eels, supposing they came back singly or in small detachments; for, seeing that the cold weather does not end until March, and that eels begin to descend in July, and continue descending until the end of November, only three months would be allowed for their ascent; so that if they did ascend, they must come up in droves.

We have all heard of the notion that chopped horse-hairs thrown into the water turn into eels, and the many other ideas accounting for their breeding in equally absurd ways. The fixed belief among a large number of Broadsmen is, that they breed upon the land, and subsequently take to the water. Others, more intelligent, believe that the young ones are produced in the river in the spring; and they positively state that they have cut eels open in February and found them full of young eels,—of which statement more anon. These young eels grow to about ten inches long by the autumn.

It is only at the first obstacles on the rivers Yare and Bure—the flour-mills on the upper reaches—that the elvers are noticed; and here they appear in very large numbers. The “New Mills,” in the city of Norwich, is a building which completely spans the river. There are brick walls on each side the river, and no means of access save through the sluices and by the floats of the wheels.

Here the tiny elvers force their way in countless thousands, wriggling through every crevice, and even over the floor of the mills on their upward march. But no adult eels ascend; and this can be positively stated. Yet in the period between "haysel" (hay-harvest) and November, the silver-bellied eels descend in thousands, and of all sizes. A ton-weight has been taken in one week at Hellesdon Mills, which are the next mills above the New Mills. Two of these eels lately taken at the New Mills weighed 11 lb. the pair. Now, although the silver-bellied eel is undoubtedly a fast grower, yet eels of the size caught in the nets at the New Mills must be several years old, and must have passed all their lives since elverhood above the mills. Can it then be reasonably supposed that these eels have passed so much of their lives without procreation of their species? Scarcely; and it is therefore a fair conclusion that the procreation of large numbers of eel takes place in fresh water.

This leads us to the question, What is the object of the yearly migration of the silver-bellied eel? If the above suggestions are correct, it cannot be for breeding purposes alone; and in our opinion the most probable solution is the following: Eels multiply as fast as other fish, and probably grow faster. At all events, their numbers are incredibly large; and if they bring forth their young alive, the latter are not subject to so many chances of destruction as the spawn of other fish. Nor are eels themselves subject to so many destroying influences as

other fish. Therefore each year the rivers get overcrowded with them, and a certain proportion "swarms" off, and is lost in the sea. These eels are caught in Lowestoft and Gorleston harbours, and beyond that we cannot learn anything of their future fate.

The New Mills affords the strongest illustration of the non-return of the adult eel; but the same tale is told of all the other mills on the Yare and Bure. It may be interesting to know that the common lampern is caught in good numbers at the mills on its descent of the rivers, but the previous ascent of young or old has not been noticed. When the lamperns begin to run, the eels stop. The only species of eel taken at the New Mills is the silver-bellied eel.

A very curious phenomenon is sometimes observable in the upper waters of the Yare and Waveney: the eels come down in large solid balls from one to two feet in diameter, heads inside and tails out; and these living balls roll down the river, and plump into the nets with such force as to carry them away, for which reason the eel-fishers at the mills dread their coming. We cannot even guess at the cause of this singular eel-freak.

It will have been noticed that we have alluded to the eel as being viviparous. Naturalists affirm that the eel deposits its spawn as other fish do, and state that the microscope reveals the presence of spawn and milt in the eel. This is so much opposed to all the statements and experience of eel-fishers and eel-setters, that we cannot

accept it as a fact ; and after listening to so many eel-fishers who stoutly affirm that they have constantly opened eels in February which have been full of minute living eels (not parasites), and that in a tub of eels young ones have been found in the morning that were not there overnight, we strongly lean to the theory that eels are ovoviviparous. To use their own words, there are thousands and thousands of eel-fry all alive in the bodies of eels cut open in February.

The young fry are contained in a membranous sac as long and thick as one's finger, and the eyes and backbones of the fry are distinguishable. When the sac is cut open, the fry unbend themselves and wriggle about. Eels are found in this state during February, March, and April.

So far with respect to the first species which our veteran eel-fishers describe.

No. 2 is the grig or snig, a yellowish eel with a projecting under-lip. This grows to a good size. It does not migrate to the same extent as the species last described ; and out of a catch of 20 stone-weight of eels, there will not be a single grig. It works to and fro to a limited extent in February and March, when eel-nets are sometimes set especially for its capture ; and also in November, when the silver-bellied eel has ceased running. The grig is caught by all the usual methods.

3. The broad or thick nosed eel, of which species only a chance-one gets into the eel-sets. This is not at all a nice-flavoured eel, and appears to be baser in its tastes,

feeding on garbage, and forming a contrast to the first-named eel, which is a clean feeder.

So far our informants agree with naturalists as to the number of species, but now they are positive that there is in these rivers a fourth distinct species of eel—the “hooking” eel or “gloat,”—and this is the blackish medium-sized eel taken by anglers, babblers, and on night-lines. It does not migrate, and only chance specimens get into the eel-nets.

With respect to the capture of eels in Norfolk waters, there is much that is interesting to be said. The less important species are taken by babbling and spearing.

Babbling is often a profitable and easy way of catching eels. The *modus operandi* is to thread a number of lob-worms on worsted until a bunch is formed; a weight is attached, and the bait is lowered to the bottom. The babbler sits in his boat through the night, with a short rod in each hand, and every now and then lifts the bab a little. When he feels the tug of an eel, he lifts it gently into the boat, the eel's teeth being entangled in the worsted. The great time for babbling is when the roach and bream are “rouding” or spawning in the spring. There are certain well-known spawning-grounds, such as the gravelly shoals on the Ranworth bank of the Bure, opposite Horning Church, and lower down at St Benedict's Abbey. On these grounds the fish collect to spawn in vast numbers, and the eels follow them in hosts. The babblers follow the eels, and you may see fifteen boats as

close together as possible, babbling away, and catching as much as four stone-weight of eels per boat of a night. At such times it is quite useless to bab anywhere else than on the spawning-grounds. You can hear the eels sucking away at the spawn in the weeds; and they gorge themselves to such an extent that they will lie motionless on their backs on the gravel, with distended stomachs; and when caught by the bab, they will frequently die during the night, instead of living for days, as an eel will otherwise do in a boat. When they are cut open, the spawn flows from them in a stream.

Eel-spearing is quite an athletic occupation, as well as one requiring much skill and knowledge of the habits of eels. There are two kinds of spears in use in different parts of the Broad district. The one in use on the Yare and Bure is the "pick," formed of four broad serrated blades or tines, spread out like a fan; and the eels get wedged between these. The spear in use on the Ant and Thurne is the dart, and is made with a cross-piece, with barbed spikes set in it like the teeth of a rake. The mode of using both is the same. They are mounted at the end of a long slender pole or shaft, by which they can be thrust into the mud. These thrusts are not made at random; but the "pickers" watch for the bubbles which denote the presence of an eel in the mud, and they aim accordingly.

CHAPTER XXXII.

EEL-SETS.

THE modes of capture detailed in the last chapter are not applicable to the silver-bellied eel, which is only caught in the eel-sets. There are about a score of these nets set at various points on the rivers Bure, Thurne, Ant, and the dykes leading to the various Broads, and their use is of great antiquity. Some of them have been worked in the same spots for hundreds of years. The mode of setting them is as follows:—

A wall of close-meshed and stout network is stretched across the river, the lower side weighted with lead and resting on the bottom, and the upper side floated by means of pieces of wood. In the bed of the river are three stakes—one in the middle, and one near each bank; to each of these stakes blocks are attached; through these blocks pass separate ropes, one end of each rope being attached to the top of the net above each stake, the other ends of the ropes leading to the eel-boat moored by the bank. By hauling on these ropes the net can be pulled to

the bottom of the river. In the wall of netting there are (say) four apertures, at equal distances apart; to each aperture a narrow network pipe or tube about six yards long, and kept distended by wooden hoops, is attached. At equal distances in the interior of each tube three funnel-shaped circles of net are fastened (the shape of these can be understood by reference to a bow-net, or to one of those ink-bottles out of which the ink cannot flow when turned upside-down). These "pods" are stretched down the river, and attached to stakes, fixed in the bed of the river, by ropes, which lead from buoys on the surface of the water, through blocks on the stakes, and fastened on shore, two on either side. The eels passing down the river make their way into the long "pods" through the narrow necks or apertures of the stops, and cannot find their way back again.

The nets are only set during ebb-tide and at night. While they are set, the men must be constantly on the watch. On the approach of a wherry, the ropes are hauled upon so that the net is pulled down to admit of the wherry passing over.

When the tide flows it is useless to keep the net set, as the eels do not run. It is therefore pulled down, and the men go to sleep. In the morning the three ropes are slackened, and the floats of the net bring it to the top. The floats are then taken off the warp of the net, in order that the latter may not be injured by a passing wherry while the men are attending to the pods.

The guy-ropes attached to the pods are next cast off, when the buoys can be hauled in. The pods are hauled into the boat, and detached from the main net, and their contents emptied into a tub.

While pursuing our inquiries into the mode of working the sets, we arranged with a notable eel-setter to spend a night with him at his eel-set. Six o'clock one moonless November night saw us at the village of Horning, on the banks of the river Bure, where the eel-setter was waiting for us. Stepping into his boat, we were rowed by him down the dark winding river. The sky was cloudless, and the stars remarkably brilliant—the Milky Way shining with a lustre rarely seen. There were also frequent flashes of what, at another period of the year, would be called summer lightning. A faint aurora added to the loveliness of the night, and the silence was broken only by the dip of our oars, and the faintest of whisperings from the dry reed-tops shaking in the light wind. It was a lovely night for November, but not a good eel night. Alluding to the "break" of stars above us, the man said that it foretold rough stormy weather; and surely enough, this followed the next day. Passing one eel-setter's hut, we rowed for two miles before reaching the one in which we were to spend the night. At last a ruddy gleam of firelight shone out of an open door, and we were presently ensconced in the cabin of the eel-boat, where the father of its proprietor, a veteran eel-fisher, was waiting for us. The boat was a Norwegian ship's-boat, and had

been bought from a sale of wreckage. Upon the boat a hut had been built about 10 feet by 6, and 5 feet high. Inside there were two bunks, and a fireplace in which burned a fire so hot that overcoats and wraps were quickly thrown off. The net was down, and the floats and buoys were gurgling about on the ebbing tide. All through the night, while the tide ebbed, we kept watch and ward, the old man taking the lead over his son, notwithstanding it was the son's set. It is needless to say that we talked continuously, such talk as the writer loves: eels and their habits, fish and fishing, otters, wild-fowl, and all the interesting items of Broad life were discussed, and notes jotted down in our note-book, while the younger man patiently held a candle near us. Every few minutes one or other of the men would peep out to see if a wherry was in sight, and to lower the net if necessary. Dark-tanned sails are much more easily distinguished than white ones at night, and black buoys are more distinguishable than white ones. It is surprising what a distance a black sail can be seen in the flat treeless landscape. On misty nights the men can only trust to their ears, which do not always fulfil their duty. Sometimes dogs are trained to bark when a wherry is coming; but it does not do to rely upon a dog, as he sleeps like his master, and the net gets torn, and much pecuniary loss is occasioned. A net such as this one—set where the river is about 30 yards wide—will cost about £30 to make; so, naturally, much care is taken of them. They

are "braided" or made in the winter, all the family assisting. The material used is a soft, strong cotton twine, and the net when made is first tanned and then tarred. This net is set right across the river, but below this spot the nets do not actually reach from bank to bank. The outer curve of the river where the water is "fleet" (shallow) and weedy is left free, so that the weeds borne down by the tide, which always drift to the outer curve, may have free passage; the eels take the deeper water near the bank.

With regard to the amount of eels caught in a night, the take, under favourable circumstances, runs from 20 up to 40 stones-weight of eels in one night. Thirty years ago, 110 stones were taken in one night in a set at Fishley; and forty-six years ago, our informant took 300 stones-weight (14 lb. to the stone) in four nights in a net set at Hardley Cross on the river Yare. The Yare is the best eel-river of all, but it could not be properly "set" now, because of the alterations in Yarmouth harbour, which have so accelerated the tides that no whole net could stand against the ebb and the rubbish it brings down. A half-net might be set, but even that would be costly to maintain.

Thirty years ago, the tides made but little difference in the rivers. At Ranworth, on the Bure, the water would then flow down for three weeks at a time, the flood-tide not overcoming the natural current of the river. Now, the tides as a rule flow and ebb their alternate six hours

with great swiftness and regularity. This militates against eel-setting in the lower reaches and the larger Yare, which, in addition to great depth, has a width of about 60 yards.

On the 14th of October 1881, there was a terrible south-westerly gale, which uprooted trees by the hundred, tore the white water off the Broads, and drove it in sheets over the marshes, rendering existence out of doors perilous. In these lonely eel-huts, which trembled in the blast, the eel-fishers sat watching their nets fearfully, yet hopeful of an unprecedented catch, for the eels were on the run. The ebb-tide ran with such fierceness, however, and carried down with it such quantities of weeds and rubbish, that between five and six o'clock on that memorable Friday evening every net that was set was carried away, and could not be repaired until the storm abated. The tide ebbed until nine o'clock on Saturday morning; and then, when the river was very empty, the salt-tide came up with overwhelming force, and flowed until nine o'clock on the Sunday morning—that is, for twenty-four hours—spreading destruction among the fish, strewing the ronds with dead and dying pike, roach, and bream, and carrying them on its current even where the upward stream had lost its saltness. It was stated that the eel-sets had stopped the rush of fish upward while escaping from the salts to the Broads; but as a matter of fact, no nets were set during the flow, and the fish had an uninterrupted passage, had they been enabled to avail themselves of it,

but the inrush of the salt water was too sudden for them to flee from it.

The first effect of a westerly gale on these rivers is to empty them. Its next effect is to fill the North Sea with water blown in from the Atlantic; and when this is heaped up and the flow begins, the rivers are rapidly filled. The last incursion of the salts was seven years ago, and it was more destructive to fish than the October one.

The eelmen, living so much on the water at night, and being, as a rule, quite alone, become very observant, and seem to think a good deal of what they do see; hence their remarks are always worth listening to. The two with us this night were favourable specimens, no doubt; the father with a large store of experience, and the son, a good-looking young fellow, chiming in with bits of information and hints which the father had forgotten.

At two o'clock in the morning the tide had turned, and the net was lowered. There was nothing more to do until morning, and we might have slept if sleep had been possible, but the couch was rather hard and narrow. The circumstances were novel in the extreme: the flickering firelight danced about the cabin, and showed the forms of the two men uncomfortably resting in the opposite corners; and although they themselves could not sleep, they kept as quiet as mice in order to give us a chance of sleeping. We appreciated this thoughtfulness on their part; but the knowledge of the effort required was in itself sufficient to keep us awake. So we lay broad awake,

with occasional acute attacks of pins and needles, until the dawn.

It will not do for the eel-setter to sleep too soundly, even when his net is lowered, as the friendly wherry-men give him a warning hail as they approach; and if he did not acknowledge the hail, they would cease to give it.

At seven o'clock we went out into the fresh violet-coloured morning, and the pods were taken up. We watched the operation with great interest, for upon the result much depended. One by one they were gathered in, the ends untied, and the eels poured into a tub. The destruction of fresh-water fish was represented by one ruff, just large enough to have two ends to it. The eels were all grigs, except two silver-bellied ones, the run of the latter being over, and the net only being kept down in order that we might have an opportunity of inspecting it. The men can distinguish the silver-belly in the dark by the firm feel of it. To handle the eels the men take a small handful of grass, which enables them to grasp the slippery customers.

It was a stormy-looking sunrise; and although there was not much wind then, yet the wherries were close-reefed, and ready for stormy weather.

While rowing homeward, we came to another set, and requested its owner to raise his pods, which he readily did. There were eels in each, and two small ruffs. Great quantities of ruffs are caught at times, and the men's fingers get pricked by their sharp spines.

On our return to breakfast at Horning, we found that the news of our expedition had spread, and eel-set men from all parts had gathered to meet us and offer evidence. A picturesque set of men they were, amphibious in their appearance to the greatest degree, and very grateful for the friendly interest we took in them. We have not room to give all the evidence we took on this subject, but we may state that it is positively proved that eel-sets are not in any way prejudicial to the angler. It is only occasionally that other fish than eels are entangled in them, and then only in trifling numbers. The benefit they do to the angler is great. Allusion has been made to the spawn-eating propensities of the eel; but only those who have seen them on the spawning-beds can realise the immense quantities they really consume—in all probability more than half that deposited. A man who has been keeper for fifty years over 700 acres of water at Hickling, states that the spawn which has been hanging thickly on the rushes over night, has all been taken off by the eels before morning, and asserts that if the nets were done away with there would be more eels and less fish—an opinion we heartily concur in.

Since writing the above we have received a letter from the occupier of Horstead Mills, the first mills up the river Bure. He says:—

“There seem to be three distinct species [of eels] caught here—a silver-bellied one with sharp nose, some with flattened noses, and others with brownish-yellow

bellies. They come down principally on dark nights after a sudden heavy downfall, and hardly ever run in bright moonshine. They usually begin to come down about the end of August until the first frost. I have seen the young eels ascending. They creep up the perpendicular sluice-gates. The largest I have seen would be about four inches long. When other fish (bait) come into the net, which is very rare, the eels, as a rule, will not run.

“The nets occasionally take a few of what are known here as babbing eels, which are nearly black.”

The last-named eel is clearly the same as the hooking eel or gloat of our other informants, and there can be little doubt that there are really four species of eels in these waters.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SEA-BREACHES.

THE contour of the Norfolk coast, as it at present exists, is very different from that depicted on ancient maps. Setting aside the earlier period, when the present level of the marshes was an arm of the sea, or estuary, and the sand-bank on which Yarmouth now stands was rising from the waves, authentic maps show a number of projecting capes or nesses which now do not exist. In addition to this we have the evidence of buried churches and villages to show how the sea has encroached upon the land, worn away the projections, and smoothed away the roughnesses. These changes are still visibly progressing, and he would be a bold man who would say that the troubles in connection with the sea are over. The struggle of Yarmouth for existence has already been alluded to; but there is another part of the coast where the sea has invaded Norfolk, and again may do so. This is between Winterton and Waxham, hard by Horsey Mere. On the one side is the sea, on the other side is the mere

and the low marsh. Within three miles of the sea—that is, at Potter Heigham—the tide, which has entered the rivers at Yarmouth, after 25 miles of sinuous river, flows upwards with a strong current through Heigham bridges. There is but little difference between the level of the sea at low tide and the marshes and Broads at this point, and at high tide the sea is the higher by three or four feet. The only barrier between sea and lake is a line of “miel”-banks, which are [simply banks of sand blown up by the wind, held together by Marum grasses. Between these banks are wide gaps, and through these gaps the sea has many times broken in and flooded the marshes. Upon the Marum grass (*Arundo arenaria*), which grows in the loosest sand, the welfare of a wide district rests. Where it grows abundantly, Marum brooms and housewives’ dusters and whisks used to be made of it. It was cut and bleached for making mats, and houses were thatched with it. Its value as a plant which would grow on sand, and so form a nucleus for the aggregation of more sand and the binding of all together, has long been recognised, and it was constantly sown by the Dutch on their sea-shore as well as on the Norfolk coast. When the danger of sea-breaches was fully recognised, an Act was passed (in the year 1608) to remedy it, and Commissioners were appointed to preserve the banks. It is quite probable that they made rules to protect the Marum grasses and prohibit any interference with such as grew along the sea-shore, for there is a widespread notion

that some penalty is attached to plucking the grasses ; and rather than dismiss the popular idea as incorrect, we are inclined to think it had good foundation in some by-law of the Commissioners.

Blomfield, writing of the year 1608, says :—

“At this time there were such violent inundations, occasioned by the high winds, that incredible damage both to houses, men, and beasts was done in many parts of England, and in several places of this county to such a degree, that an Act was passed for the speedy recovery of many thousand acres of marsh and other grounds lately overflown, &c., in the county of Norfolk, and for the prevention of the like hereafter — which sets forth that a part of the sea-shore lying between the towns of Great Yarmouth and Happisborrow (or Haseboro), lying low, and being sand only, was lately broken down and washed away by the violence of the tides, so that the sea broke in every tide, and with every sea-wind came up the Norwich river into the very body and heart of the county of Norfolk, drowning much hard grounds, and many thousand acres of marsh, upon which great part of the wealth of the county depends, being most rich grounds, and without which the uplands, which are mostly dry and barren, cannot be husbanded ; and by means of the salt water, the fisheries between Yarmouth and Norwich, as well in rivers as Broads, were much damaged, so that the great plenty which used to maintain many poor men was gone, and the markets badly served

with fresh fish—to remedy which there were appointed eighteen commissioners, who, according to the direction of the Act, were to stop the breaches, it being to be feared that in time to come further mischief might follow by other breaches, or enlarging of those already made, if speedy remedy be not provided, and God of His mercy stop not the same.”

There is one curious thing to be noted in the above extract, and that is that it was evident that poor people, and therefore the public generally, had the right to fish; and fishing then meant not only in the rivers, but in the Broads—a fact which those owners of Broads who are now endeavouring to close them to the public should remember.

In 1781 there were many breaches of the sea between Waxham and Winterton, so that every tide the salt water and sands destroyed the marshes and the fishes in the Broads and river; and if the wind blew briskly from the north-west, by which the quantity of water in the North Sea was largely increased from the Atlantic, the salt water drowned all the low country even as far as Norwich. In the following eight years the breaches were seriously widened. The miel-banks are about 40 feet in height, but very uneven; and as the strength of a chain is only equal to its weakest link, so the protection afforded by the banks is minimised by the gaps. In July 1791 several breaches occurred near Horsey, so that all the land side of the banks was deeply flooded. The largest breach was 200

yards in width, and through this a vast body of water poured.

This appears to have been the last serious inroad of the sea ; but it would be rash to conclude that all danger from this source is over. If you stand on these yellow heaps of sand, and look on the sea at high tide, and then consider that during the last century the level of the marshes has considerably fallen, through the subsidence of the spongy soil from drainage, it does not need a very vivid imagination to suppose, first, a continuance of high north-westerly winds, so that the North Sea is heaped up with water from the Atlantic Ocean ; then a sudden north-easterly gale, and a high tide caused by lunar influences,—and in would come the sea once more with a roar and a rush, and claim dominion over the fair lands it would waste. Nor can it be said that such a combination is impossible. In January 1883, the tide fell to the lowest ebb ever known on this coast within the memory of man. It was four feet below the normal point of low tide, and caused great consternation in Yarmouth Haven, where vessels were placed in perilous positions. Now, if the tide rose four feet *above* its normal level, and the winds helped in the manner indicated, breaches of the *miel-banks* would occur. May such a thing never happen ; but the mention of its possibility will show how much akin to the sea are these level and low East Anglian marshes.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FLOODS, SALT-TIDES, AND TEMPESTS.

THE chronicles of the city of Norwich show that once in every fifty years or so a heavy flood has wrought devastation along the low banks of the rivers Wensum and Yare ; but the most disastrous within living memory was that which occurred in the winter of 1878. In the upper reaches of the Wensum above the city, the river, swelled by heavy rains, rose rapidly, and the millers appear to have kept the water banked up until, becoming simultaneously alarmed, they opened their flood-gates, and let the water down to Norwich. Unable to escape by its natural but restricted channel, it spread over the lower portions of the city, and the streets became rushing torrents. The damage and subsequent destitution among the poorer people were very great, and were nobly met by the citizens. Below Norwich the marshes all the way to Yarmouth were a vast lake. The kingfishers, driven from their usual haunts, took refuge in Norwich streets, and perched on the house-tops ; while some were so tired of

flying about, with no place to rest, that they fell into the water and were drowned,—a curious fate for a fish-eating bird ; but kingfishers are no swimmers.

In the summer, or rather the time of year which should have been the summer, of the watery year of 1879, the marshes were again inundated, and it was a singular and striking sight to see the great expanse of smooth steadily flowing water, with here and there a pollard willow, or a boat-house standing alone above it. It was before the marsh-hay was cut, and some of the occupiers towed large spars about over the submerged grass, to prevent as far as possible the mud in suspension from settling upon it.

Each year since, there have been one or two heavy floods, and the owners of marshes are in despair. It is not only the amount of rain which causes a flood—for a flood may be caused when there is only the normal quantity of fresh water in the river. The truth is, that the land is too near the level of the sea, if not actually below it, and the level will still fall, owing to the continuing shrinkage of the peat. Then Yarmouth Haven is being dredged and deepened, and so allows a greater volume of water to pour in at each flood-tide. On the occasion of a very high tide, the river rapidly fills to overflowing ; and if it does not overtop the embankments, it finds some weak place to gain an entry, and so floods the marshes. Thus, in 1882, a very high tide caused a great flood, the water being waist-deep in the cottages at Coldham Hall. Boats were carried right up to Surling-

ham, and one was landed on the top of a low haystack. The water would probably not have gained such a head had it not been for a gap in the bank of a dyke leading from Surlingham Broad, through which the water poured, and took the cottages in the rear. Owners are raising their banks in every direction ; but this is a most difficult and expensive thing to do, on account of scarcity of suitable materials ; and unless all owners make equally effective banks, there might as well not be any. In the summer, when the water is low, the rats pierce the banks with their holes ; and although many of these are stopped up by men employed for the purpose, yet those which are left get enlarged by the water, and are a fruitful source of damage to soft banks.

What is to be the remedy for this state of things, no one seems to know. Such valuable lands cannot be abandoned to the rage of the sea ; yet the natural remedy—that of controlling the outlet by sluices at Yarmouth, as is done on the Dutch waters—is one that would be violently opposed by Yarmouth, whose precarious tenure is explained in another chapter.

What are known as the salt-tides are chiefly the bane of the angler. These are preceded by a very low tide, which leaves a minimum of water in the rivers. Then the flood-tide, coming in with great rapidity, quite overcomes the fresh water, and carries the salt for miles up, even to Horning and Potter Heigham. The sudden change sickens

the fish, which have probably dropped low down with the ebb-tide, and they die in millions. As long as they are able, they head up stream to escape from it, but soon weaken and die; and their bodies are swept into eddies and bays, and stopped by any obstruction of weeds or timber, or wherries moored at a staithe. The country people pick up the best, and carry them home in great strings.

The effect of one of these salt-tides (in October 1881) is related in the chapter on Eel-sets; and we must go back six years before that for another incursion of the salts, which was extremely destructive to the fish. Both were accompanied by strong westerly gales.

The destruction of fish on these occasions is very great, and angling, of course, is prejudicially interfered with. It is said, however, that after every such invasion of the salts, the perch-fishing improves,—the reason alleged being, that the salt water brings up an immense quantity of food in the shape of shrimps, of which perch are very fond; but it may also be that the destruction of such immense quantities of the coarser fish leaves more room for the perch to feed and grow.

In a country as open as the sea, wind-storms are frequent and heavy; and the passage of the gales is curiously marked by the number of poplars which are felled by them. The roots of the numerous poplars do not penetrate very deeply into the soil, but seem to spread laterally

near the surface. Thus there is but little hold to withstand a fierce gale, and the trees fall by the score,—their roots, and the soil torn up with them, standing up, like so many targets, in a breadth of marsh. In the river-valley near Beccles, some hundreds of trees were blown down in this way, and the picture of devastation was very striking.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NATURAL PHENOMENA.

AN illustration of the effect of a "rodges-blast" has been given in the Cruise of the Coya; and since that chapter was written we have made a still more intimate acquaintance with these peculiar wind phenomena, so frequently recurring in the Broad district. One day in May we were sailing down the Yare in a wherry, and saw numbers of them crossing the river, often within a few yards of us. As each one drew near, the sheet was cast loose, so that the wherry might not be capsized, as she might easily be if she caught the full weight of one; but we escaped being struck, although the water was whirling and bubbling with them ahead and astern.

We have not been able to trace the etymology of the name by which these blasts are known, and it is spelt as it is pronounced. It is really a rotary wind-squall or whirlwind, and is most likely to occur with a south-west wind. Sometimes the blasts are very violent, and come without warning. Even if you see one coming over the marsh, convulsing the grasses or lifting the reed-stacks

high in air, you cannot tell whether it will strike you or not, its course is so erratic. It may wreck a windmill fifty yards away, and leave the water around you unruffled. It may blow the sail of one wherry to pieces, and another wherry close by will be becalmed. Occasionally you may see a dozen wherries in the same reach, all bound the same way, with their sails now jibing, now close-hauled, now full and now shaking, with the fitfulness of the wind. Sometimes, in a large reed-bed, you may see the reeds all laid flat in a circle, or in a carr the trees uprooted for a space, where a roddes-blast has descended. Now and then, although rarely, a veritable waterspout crosses the country, and does great damage when it breaks.

Another peculiar and uncomfortable occurrence is the "water-eynd" or sea-smoke, which covers the marsh with a dense watery vapour. On a fine bright day it will come rolling up from the sea, and suddenly everything is hidden in a cold thick mist, which puts an end to all pleasure while it lasts. In the north such a mist is called a sea-fret, but it rarely attains the density of a water-eynd. Once while being towed down to Cantley by a steamer, it came on so thickly that we could not see the banks on either side; and when we were cast off near Cantley, we had to run in at a venture, and, as it happened, struck the rond just between two boats which were moored there. Everything which was exposed to the mist was wet through directly, and it was difficult even to shut it out of the cabin.

That light of other days, the Will-o'-the-wisp, is a thing we have often looked for, and we are inclined to believe that we actually saw one at Hickling, as told in the Cruise of the Coya. Formerly, when the puddles and pools on the stagnant marsh dried and festered, and the dead fish putrefied, the bubbles of foul gases arose and sometimes ignited in a blue flickering flame. At that time they seem to have been frequently visible, and wherry-men say that they have lit pieces of paper at the uncertain flame. The last which one of these men had seen was twenty years ago, in a place where cattle-droppings were abundant, causing the marsh to be foul; and it was in such places that the "lantern-men" were most often seen. They were common near a village named Syleham in Suffolk, and the Waveney watermen call them Syleham lights. In another generation men will be inclined to think that the Will-o'-the-wisp was a creation of fancy only. A writer in 'Notes and Queries,' writing in the year 1855, says: "I have seen them both in Norfolk and Suffolk, and it is popularly believed that if a man with a lighted lantern goes near one, the enraged lantern-man will knock him down and twist his lantern to pieces." It is possible that an *explosion* of the gases generated on the marsh when a light is brought in contact with them may have given rise to this idea, which is very universal.

In the following year, another person writing to 'Notes and Queries' gives the following interesting information:—

"Stock Frost.—The watermen of Norfolk universally believe in the possibility of the water freezing at the bottom of the river, the surface still remaining flood. They assert that boat-hooks, eel-picks, &c., constantly come in contact with a coating of ice at the bottom, and that large masses of ice are often seen rising to the surface, with mud, weeds, and stone adhering. A miller has also informed me that he has known the wheel of his water-mill to be frozen to the bottom of the stream so as to stop its revolution, while the surface of the water was still unfrozen." And in the following month another observer says :—

"However apparently irreconcilable with science and reason, it is nevertheless true that ice is sometimes formed at the bottom when the upper part of the stream remains unfrozen. This happens occasionally in the river Wensum, which runs through the city of Norwich. The wheels of water-mills are found clogged and impeded with ice at the bottom, while the water above is free."

We have never noticed this phenomenon in Norfolk waters ourselves, but it is of common occurrence in streams where the surface flows too rapidly to allow it to freeze ; and sometimes the ice breaks away in masses and rises to the surface, carrying the pebbles with them.

Although a fine sunset is scarcely a phenomenon of unusual occurrence or worth a detailed description, yet the picture depicted in the following sketch by an angling friend is so graphic, that we give it in his own words as

an illustration of the storm and sunset effects for which the marshes are famed :—

“ I have vividly before me the recollection of a remarkably fine sunset it was my good fortune to witness when fishing at Buckenham Ferry in August 1882. We were fishing against the spot known as ‘ Walpole’s Reed Bush.’ It had been a lovely warm afternoon, with an almost cloudless sky, and a soft, gentle breeze from the south-west. We had been having capital sport with the roach, —the fish running to an unusual size and in good quantity. About an hour before sunset the sky to the southward and south-east became somewhat suddenly overcast with a thick veil of misty cloud ; whilst below the sun, far into the south-west and extending to the north, huge abrupt masses of cloud were beginning to push their way and obscure the sunlight. Large drops of rain soon began to patter down, and our attention was attracted about the same time by a brilliant flash of lightning and a long rolling crash of thunder from a cloud which had developed in enormous volume to the east, and which, quickly closing with the other clouds, shut out the last remaining bit of blue sky, and overspread the landscape with an almost Cimmerian darkness. As you may imagine, we made speedy preparations for departure ; but the rain soon leaving off, and the clouds beginning to break to windward, we decided to stay for a little more sport. The light breeze had been gradually dying away, and all around was now a perfect calm,—not a ripple disturbed the placid surface of the water, and

every reed and object along the ronds was reflected as in a highly polished mirror. Far-distant sounds came to us with a startling clearness, whilst the twitter of a swallow as it darted in close proximity to our boat seemed magnified by the perfect stillness to a screech. The sun, which up to this had been hidden behind great piles of solid-looking cloud, now began to send forth a flood of golden light: it made its appearance, and the clouds suddenly breaking up, we were presented almost in the twinkling of an eye with a scene which for gorgeousness and splendour of colour, and grandeur and magnificence of effect, would have baffled the efforts of a Turner to depict. Looking down stream (eastward), the line of poplars running from the railway station to the ferry-house past the old 'Horse Shoes' could be seen standing out in an almost white relief, and with weird and strange effect, against an immense and continuous background of the most wonderful black cloud I ever saw; whilst to add to the rare beauty of the scene, a broad and charming band of exquisitely coloured rainbow presented itself with a surprising brilliancy across the blackest part. Looking up stream (westward) the prospect was one to be remembered for a lifetime. The sun, which was nearing the horizon, was pouring forth a flood of gold and crimson light, suffusing the air with an indescribable radiance, whilst the river resembled a stream of liquid fire. The clouds were broken up into the most grotesque and remarkable forms, making it easy to trace in the shapes presented an almost

endless variety of strange birds, fishes, and animals, with gigantic castles and trees. Rocks were piled on rocks, with huge masses of gold-edged purple interspersed here and there, with numerous brilliant little fragments, whilst the general appearance of the broad bands of up-shooting sunlight conveyed the idea of the blowing up of some enormous fortress. In the immediate vicinity of the sun the smaller clouds were of the most brilliant gold colour; higher up and farther away they became red or crimson; those at a greater distance purple, fading to grey. As we were gazing on this enchanting scene, a large barge of the class known locally as a "billy-boy" went slowly and silently gliding by, floating on the now rising tide, and as she came between us and the wonderful sunlight with her huge black-looking sail, afforded a marvellous contrast. A man was at the helm, and for lack of wind another was steadying her along with a quant, who, as he stepped slowly along the deck, was singing with a full clear voice a plaintive ditty in a minor key: add to his melody, as it floated to us across the water, the enchanting scenery with which we were surrounded and the balmy air of a warm summer's evening, and we have the finishing touches to one of nature's grandest and most exquisite pictures, the recollection of which will, I hope, be fresh in my memory for many years to come."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CRUSADE AGAINST POACHING.

It is interesting to trace the long-continued struggle which legitimate angling has had with poaching for many years in Norfolk waters. In the year 1857 anglers began to be aware that netting to a frightful extent was practised in these rivers and Broads, and the takes by the rod had suffered in consequence. These waters are so teeming with fish, that it took anglers a long time to make the discovery that the numbers were being thinned. In an old number of 'The Field'—July 1858—is a paper on bream and roach fishing in Norfolk, and in it is this paragraph: "The largest take I remember was 22 stone, landed by a man and a boy in one boat; and I was once one of eight rods who caught 44 stone in a few hours; and 12 stone used to be not by any means an uncommon take some years ago." But when the takes fell to 10 stone, 8 stone, or even 5 stone, anglers began to think there was something wrong; and the cause was not far to seek. In the spring-time the bream crowd into the Broads for

the purpose of spawning, and at this "rouding"-time they are so thickly collected together in certain localities that there is not room for a boat to pass through them. On the river Yare this was notably the case in Rockland and Surlingham Broads; great drag-nets were used to surround the spawning fish, and waggon-loads and tons upon tons weight were taken during this season. The nets, indeed, were often so full of fish that they could be scarcely drawn ashore without breaking. Of course the spawn that had already been deposited was to a large extent destroyed. Nets were also set at the mouths of dykes, and the fish collected in the dykes at that season were driven into them by disturbance of the water.

Matters stood thus when, in the month of May 1857, a meeting of anglers was convened in Norwich to consider the propriety of forming an Angling Society to aid the authorities in preventing illegal fishing, and for promoting the rational recreation of the members. At this meeting Mr James Skippon, jun., to whom great honour is due, read a very interesting report. He at first acted entirely on his own responsibility, and had issued and posted hand-bills along the river-side, warning people against illegal netting. Notwithstanding these bills, the fish poured into Norwich market as freely as ever; and as it appeared that the greater part of the fish was sent by persons who had hired the Broads of Rockland and Surlingham, Mr Skippon actually succeeded in bribing these men to forego their netting during the spawning season.

In his report he said: "Not only did they send immense quantities of fish, but, during the spawning season, now on or coming on, the destruction among the fish was almost incredible; the small fish, not fit for sale, were thrown aside for manure. From this and other information, I came to the conclusion to prevent, if possible, upon payment of a reasonable sum, the fish in those waters from being disturbed during the spawning season of this year. In furtherance of my object, I obtained an interview with the three persons who exercised the right of fishing on the Broads named, and, with considerable difficulty, effected an arrangement with them,—viz., that they should not use a net of any description for the catching of fish, except for tench, in the waters belonging to them, between the 4th May inst. and the 14th June next, when the spawning season would be quite over on the Broads, and the weeds become too high for a net to be used. I at once prepared agreements, properly stamped, and by appointment met the parties at Surlingham Ferry, and obtained their signatures. . . . By this arrangement the principal breeding-grounds have been secured for this year. . . . Upwards of 600 stone of fish have been saved from destruction, besides spawn, and at the trifling cost of about £10."

This led to the foundation of the Norwich and Norfolk Anglers' Society, which, with an active secretary, devoted itself to the suppression of netting on the Broads during the spawning season. This was done by purchase from

the persons who hired the Broads; and as some surprise may be felt that such persons should forego the privilege of catching tons of fish for the small sums paid to them, it may be stated that the market value of the fish for food was comparatively small. Some were sent to the large towns in the Midlands or to London, and sold, principally among the Jews, at 3d. a pound. A large quantity was sold to the crab fishermen at Cromer and Sheringham at 2s. 6d. per bushel, to be used for bait.

Rockland Broad, containing 64 acres, was hired at a rent of 2s. per acre; and the rules and regulations, which are prefaced by an apology for their *strictness*, deserve quotation. The first five are as follows:—

“1. That no net or snare be used on the Broad, or dykes leading thereto.

“2. That no member or members, forming one party, fish with more than *ten trimmers* at one time with live bait for pike, nor with more than *twenty-four anchor liggers* or dead lines. Only one hook to be used on each ligger or dead line.

“3. That no trimmers with live bait be used in the months of April, May, or June.

“4. That no fish caught in the Broad or dykes be sold.

“5. That the fence months for the different species of fish shall be as follows: Jack or pike, from the 1st of March to the 1st of September; perch and bream, from the 1st of April to the 30th of June; roach, from the 1st of May to the 31st of July.”

It happened, however, that the Society, which had only consulted the landowners round the Broad, was disappointed. The Broad was on copyhold ground, and the tenants of the manor had a joint right of fishing in it. They therefore set at nought the regulations of the Society, and Rockland Broad had to be given up. Although this was of consequence then, it is of no consequence now, as, since 1877, even owners of private Broads cannot net them during the close time ; and when the fish have returned to the river after spawning, any amount of netting on the Broads does not appreciably affect the rivers ; and as far as Rockland Broad is concerned, it is better that the netting should be in the hands of poor men, who partially live by it, than in the hands of the richer owners of other Broads, who either net for amusement or let the right of netting to some one else.

In March 1858 a deputation from the Society waited upon the Mayor of Norwich, and called the attention of his Worship to the lax manner in which the Corporation performed their duties as conservators of the river with respect to the preservation of fish therein.

In September 1858 the Society purchased "six glass jars, in which to deposit supposed offensive matter in the water, for the purpose of having the same analysed." In the same year the bribe for the prevention of netting on Surlingham Broad was £7.

As far as the limited means in their power went, the Society worked hard to prevent poaching, taking advan-

tage of the terms of the charter granted to the Corporation of Norwich by King Edward VI. in 1461, which made them the conservators of the river for some sixteen or seventeen miles—that is, down to Hardley Cross—and also of the Act of 33 Geo. III., prohibiting the taking of unsizable fish.

We may now take a jump to the year 1877, when the Norfolk and Suffolk Fisheries Act was passed, under which by-laws were made. Many prosecutions have been instituted by the Yare Preservation Society for breaches of their by-laws, and convictions obtained. There were one or two mistakes in the by-laws. One was, that netting was not entirely prohibited. It was then urged by influential persons that when fish attained the size of a pound and a half they should be taken for food, and nets of three inches from knot to knot when wet were made legal. Up to the winter of 1882 no one had thought it worth while to fish with nets of so large a mesh; but in January of that year, a net 50 yards long, 12 feet deep, and with a mesh a shade under the three inches when wet, was seized out of the wherry of a notorious poacher. In the wherry were two tons of large fish, bream and roach. A conviction was obtained; but if the man had been a little more careful in his measurement, he would have escaped. He boasts that he has taken over 50 tons of fish out of the river that winter—large fish too, seeing that the opening of the mesh is but little under 12 inches in circumference.

In consequence of the fear that the river might be ren-

dered worthless for angling by the use of legal nets, an agitation was set on foot which has resulted in the total abolition of drag-netting in the major part of the rivers.

The men who harried the rivers were very few in number—not more than half-a-dozen—but the mischief they did was immense. Before 1877 they used nets 100 yards long and 16 feet deep, with a very small mesh, so that the very eels were scooped up from the bed of the river. The netting was chiefly carried on in the spring, so that the spawn was destroyed as well as the fish. A wherry-load of fish, big and little, would be sold at £7 or £8 a ton, and the small fry were thrown on the land as manure.

On the Waveney a fishing-smack from Colchester trawled up the river—chiefly for eels, no doubt, of which she caught 90 stone-weight in a week, and about £12 worth of eels at their first trawl; but the destruction and disturbance of other fish and of spawn were immense.

On the Bure and its tributaries netting was perhaps more general than on the rivers, and practised by a larger number of people, including some of the gentry, who netted for amusement. A century ago we hear of 120 bushels of fish being taken at Ranworth by two nets at one time. The narrowness and shallowness of the rivers were favourable to the use of a stop-net, which could be placed across the channel, while a drag-net was drawn down to it. The net in common use, however, was the “turn-net.” This was a long drag-net, having a pocket at one end. This end was fixed to the bank, and the other paid out so

as to enclose a space of water, and then drawn ashore, when the fish were driven into the pocket. Netting was a business productive of food and of profit in the earlier days, but people's tastes have altered since. Angling has become so widespread a recreation that everything gives way to it. Of course the happiness of the many is of more consequence than the business of a few, and the wild Red Indian life of the regular Broad inhabitants is ousted by the pale-face civilisation of the present days, when fish and fishing is a serious hobby.

Netting was not the only method of poaching rife in these waters. The snaring of pike in the spawning season, when the fish get up the dykes and streams, was actively carried on, and we are afraid still is so, as we have often seen men walking on the ronds with poles, from which dangle nooses of fine wire. The *modus operandi* is simple. A pike is discerned in the clear, shallow water; the noose is dropped quietly in, and guided over the pike's head and past its gills, when a quick jerk fixes it, and the unlucky jack is dragged out. In the month of March great numbers of pike are killed in this way, and also with the "dart" or spear used in butt-spearing, as described in the chapter on Breydon Water. Liggers we have frequently alluded to—the kind in use being that made of a bundle of dried reeds tied together, about 15 inches long.

Nearly all the water-abiders now believe that it is best or all that the wholesale and destructive ways of taking

fish should be put down. Nòw there is plenty for every one in a reasonable way, whereas under the old practice the fish were fast diminishing in quantity, and only a few derived any benefit (and that of a questionable kind) from the rivers.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PIKE-FISHING IN JORDAN.¹

MANY are the people who go down to Jordan in the months of January and February if the weather be open ; but about the exact position of Jordan there is more doubt than there should be, considering the limited area of the district in which this El Dorado of anglers lies : you may see men go eastward, westward, northward, or southward, yet all bound for Jordan. "Where did you catch that 36-pounder?" "In Jordan ;" and the knowing wink of the person who replies to the question points the ambiguous nature of the answer. The truth is, that the citizens of Norwich are enthusiastic pike-fishers, and their great aim is to get as many permits for private waters as possible. Having got these permits, they naturally do not care to state where these waters are, because that would entail many applications for leave on the part of the public ; and that, again, would either disgust the proprietor,

¹ As the sport detailed is that of a friend, the "we" of the author is temporarily dropped.

or, if he were a generous man, the water would be over-fished. So, to save telling a story, or refusing in some ruder form, the unknown water is called Jordan, and the recipient of the information takes it good-humouredly, and bides his opportunity of paying you out in kind by-and-by. The whereabouts of the capture of the largest pike caught in Norfolk for several years, was thus kept a close secret for some time, and was only divulged through the indiscretion of a chance spectator. The consequence was, that the owner of the water in question had showers of applications for leave.

The Norwich pike-fisher rather scorns the magnificent Broads and rivers which lie at his door, and is not content unless he has access to private waters; and by dint of plaguing all his friends and acquaintances and customers, he obtains leave for a day's fishing in, say, half-a-dozen good waters. Out of this stock-in-trade he may manage, however, to get four times as many days' fishing in this manner. It is a time-honoured custom that when a man has a permit he may take three or four of his friends with him. Thus if he asks, say, three friends, he expects to get invitations from each of them for their particular waters. So pike-fishing in Norfolk is carried on in a very jolly and sociable kind of way.

Of many such visits to Jordan, the one I am about to describe is the freshest in my memory.

Before dawn on a sharp February morning, we met at the captain's house, just as a man with two huge cans of

live bait came up the drive. One can was full of dace, and the other full of roach, all taken with the cast-net yesterday, and kept in tanks in the river all night. Care is always taken to get the bait from a different water to that in which they are to be used as bait. There were four of us—the captain, the doctor, the barrister, and the parson; and we felt, as we got into the high dogcart, that, with such an array of talent against them, the pike would have but a poor chance. There had been a frost in the night, and the road was hard and good going. As the sun rose, the hoar-frost in the branches glistened like silver, and then changed into diamond drops, which fell upon and darkened the path beneath. A flock of sheep on their way to market were almost hidden in the steam from their bodies, which hung over and followed them in a dense cloud. Three magpies crossed the road in front of us, and we were equally divided as to whether this meant good luck or bad. And now we entered the park gates, and drove along wooded glades, where the wheels made no sound on the soft leaf-mould, until we came to the banks of a large pond or lake, where at the boathouse the keeper awaited us.

“There!” said the captain, “I told you the magpies meant bad luck; half the pool is frozen over.” And on the deep side and best water there was a thin coating of ice; while on the shallow side, where the wind had caught the water, there was no ice.

“It will most of it have thawed by twelve o’clock,

sir," said the keeper. But we could not wait so long; so we took long sticks and poles and broke the ice up for a considerable space, and then rowed to the middle of the pool, just on the edge of the ice, leaving the broken-up place to regain its tranquillity. Soon four floats were bobbing about in the calm water. Presently one dived under the ice and travelled off at a great rate. "Strike!" exclaimed three of us; "And cut the line against the ice!" quoth the fourth.

"Put your rod-top in the water, sir," suggested the keeper.

No sooner said than done; and after five minutes' play a 6-pounder was landed. Immediately afterwards a 4-pounder was caught and returned to the water. Then a couple of hours went by without a single run. The water was clear, and only five feet deep, and, for all we could see, there was not a pike in the pool. The stillness was extreme: there was not a breath of wind. Above the tree-tops the faint blue smoke from the chimneys of the mansion rose straight into the pale-blue sky. The rooks gave sleepy summer-like caws. An occasional water-hen sprawled upon the rapidly thawing ice, and broke through at the edge with more celerity than dignity. From the far-end of the lake came an occasional quack of a wild-duck, and the "kek, kek" of the drake, and a cloud of gnats came to life in a sunbeam. "Tap, tap" went a woodpecker; "coo" went the doves. "Confound it!" went the captain. "Hush!" said the parson. Lovely as

was the day, I got very cold sitting in a boat with nothing to do, and no room to stretch one's legs; so I got them to land me and one of the bait-cans on the open side of the water, while they went to the spot where they had broken the ice. My fishing prospects, however, were not improved by the change. The water was not more than 18 inches deep, as far as I could throw, and the weeds were still there in half-rotten clumps, with small clear spaces between. Spinning was out of the question, so was live-baiting with a snap-tackle; so I reluctantly adopted the live gorge, which, however, is commonly used in Norfolk. For nearly an hour I cast as far out as I could without success, although two or three times I saw my companions more happily engaged. I was just on the point of obeying their summons to lunch, when I caught sight of a pike in a clear space I had fished over five minutes before. Before my bait touched the water he came open-mouthed at it, and swallowed it straight away. "His weight was 10 lb.," is the inscription his gravestone should bear.

Then, on looking closely, I saw that every clear space had a pike in it, all madly on the feed. Once two came at the bait together, and the smaller one got it. I picked out the largest; but I could not see any of the monsters which I knew must be in the lake, until far out I saw a long dark shadow which made my heart beat. I put on a fresh bait, but rather a large one, as all the small ones had been used, and taking especial care, I cast as far as

the shadow, but three or four yards behind it. At the splash there was a tremendous swirl in the water, and my heart sank as I thought I had frightened the big one away; but in another moment my float went off at lightning pace right away towards the other side of the pool. I gave out line until all my sixty yards were gone, except a few turns, and then I was obliged to check him whether he had pouched or not. At the check he gave a heavy flounder on the surface, and then swam slowly backwards and forwards, coming a little nearer each time, until he was actually aground in the soft mud, and I inserted my gaff in his gills and lugged him ashore. Then he seemed to wake up to the idea that something was wrong, and his jumps and struggles were alarming. He weighed 19 lb., and gave less play than many a 6-pounder I have caught.

It was now half-past two, and since one o'clock I had caught five fish, weighing 10 lb., 6½ lb., 5 lb., 8 lb., and 19 lb. respectively. After this I did not touch or see a fish, and the clear water seemed tenantless. The party in the boat held the sport for another hour, and had together caught fifteen fish, one of them over 20 lb. in weight. On the same day, at Kimberley, a party caught twenty-four pike, all of good size; and on several private waters the sport was exceedingly good—thus showing it was a good feeding-day. On the 17th February 1880, two pike were taken in different waters, one weighing 30½ lb. and

the other 36 lb. ; the day after it was caught the latter measured 47 inches from the tip of its nose to the fork of its tail, and was a very beautiful fish, but not so beautiful as the smaller one. They are lucky fellows who fish in Jordan.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ORMESBY, FILBY, AND ROLLESBY BROADS.

IN the centre of the loop enclosed by the river Thurne and the coast, you will see on the map a many-armed and irregular sheet of water, the three natural divisions of which bear the names heading this chapter. From these Broad's a narrow dyke meanders south-westward, and joins the Bure below Acle. As this group of Broad's is not accessible to a yacht, we had never taken the trouble to visit it until lately, when we determined to visit Ormesby by water. So one pleasant midsummer evening the Swan sailed away from Cantley and drew slowly over the yellow flushed Breydon as the daylight faded and the tide began to make. At ten o'clock that night we passed, with lowered mast, under the bridges at the "North End," and with difficulty found a vacant mooring-place alongside the quay.

Early in the morning the skipper awoke, and noticed that the swing-candle lamp was not hanging at right angles to the shelf across the end of the cabin. He

rushed out, and found that the yacht had grounded, and as the tide receded was heeling over towards the river. It was then four o'clock, and it would not be low water until six, so that the matter was serious. Arousing the mate, they got the main halliards ashore, and fastened them to a post, and then hauling on the fall, got the Swan nearly upright again only just in time. She was now balanced on her keel, sustained in that position by the halliards reaching from masthead to post, and on the strength of rope and blocks her safety depended. We slept with one eye open, and with the other watched the tell-tale lamp for any signs of further heeling. At six o'clock the tide was still flowing downwards, but the water was nevertheless rising rapidly, being backed up by the tide, which was already flowing up Breydon, and by eight o'clock we were afloat again.

About nine o'clock our former friend the Swallow sailed away up the Bure with the flood. A quarter of an hour later, the Swan followed and passed the Swallow by the Seven Mile House. A mile or so further and we rounded to opposite the sluices controlling the exit of the dyke from these Broadas. The little canvas Berthon boat, which is towed astern of the Swan as her dingy, and which can be collapsed and carried under one's arm, was lifted over the sluices and launched on a pond covered with the pink spikes of the *Persicaria*. We were surprised, on entering the dyke leading from the pond, to find that it was not wide enough to allow even our small jolly (the

Swan's egg, as its appearance led people to call it) to be rowed in the usual way; so we had to paddle after the savage fashion, a mode of progress extremely toilsome and slow on this occasion. "Muck Fleet," on which we were now voyaging, thoroughly deserves its name, for although the water is clear, it is in places only a few inches deep, and we had to force our way through mud of but little greater consistency than the water, and extremely malodorous when stirred up.

But the banks on either hand were a study indeed in their wealth of flower and grass. Curiously enough, for the first two miles all the flowers were on one side and all the marsh-grasses on the other. On the right hand, the water was covered with bright *Persicaria* and yellow and white water-lilies in alternating patches. Low down, at the edge of the water, were the blue eyes of forget-me-nots, and above them the gaudy irises blazed in the sun. Here and there the stream was white with the summer snow shed by the May trees, which were casting off their blossoms. On the left hand the browning grasses quivered airily against the sky. So circumscribed was our view, and so quiet and lonely the course of the dyke, that a curious feeling came upon us that this was the extent of the world, and that there was nothing beyond the grassy barriers on either side but infinite space; yet, seen from the upper world of the high bank, it was but a narrow weedy ditch, on which the presence even of so small a

craft was something ludicrous. So much for the point of view from which one judges.

We toiled along, exciting great curiosity among cattle and horses, which rushed up to view us with startled curiosity. The attitudes of the horses were wonderfully beautiful: fore leg uplifted, ears bent forward, eyes most eloquent, hind legs bent in readiness to spring away; they formed beautiful studies, caricatured in every detail by the donkeys, of which there were also many.

But it was getting monotonous. The Fleet was said to be three and a half miles long; but we seemed to have come about six, without seeing any sign of a Broad. The dyke was narrower and more weedy, and low bridges forced us to lie down on our backs and squeeze under in a manner not befitting our dignity. At last we came to a spot where the dyke divided, and both channels seemed navigable only by water-hens and water-rats. The skipper climbed a tree to survey the scene, but came down no wiser, but much sadder. Selecting the channel down which there seemed to be a faint current, we struggled on, and soon found it widen out until there was space to row, while eel-nets stretched across, and rude boats half drawn up, showed signs of Broad life. Here acres of the marsh were blush-red with a profuse growth of ragged-robin—a flower which is of little account by itself, but in dense masses of such extent is singularly warm in colour. The margins were green with a thick crisp crop

of a small fern which is abundant on the margins of such dykes.

Frequently we surprised a heron as we crept quietly round a bend; and once overheard there were at least a dozen redshanks piping away, while snipe often got up from some muddy point.

At last we came to the open water of Filby Broad, down which a stiff breeze was blowing, knocking up what to the little Berthon was a respectable sea. Rowing across Filby, which is in no way different from other Broad, we came to a little red-brick bridge, and passing under this, found ourselves on another and much larger Broad, which, by the map, appeared to be Rollesby. The main body of this lay to our left, and in conjunction with Ormesby Broad, reached for some three miles further. We made for a water-side hostelry, known by the curious name of the Eel's-Foot, which we found embowered in trees, and with inviting arbours in front, where we refreshed ourselves with strawberries and "shandy-gaff."

This section of the Broad is remarkably pretty. The shores are well wooded, and there are secluded bays where water-lilies flourish. We particularly noticed the large size of the rushes, which grew well apart from each other, as if desirous of elbow-room, and to a height above the water of six or seven feet. Their stately curves, as they bowed to the wind, were very graceful; and their polished stems shone in the sun like rods of silver, darkly shaded on the under side.

We had not time to explore the rest of Rollesby or Ormesby Broad, and so left the greater part of these spacious sheets of water unvisited. The prospect of the return along the narrow dyke lay heavy on our minds. We borrowed a tow-line, however, and managed to tow the greater part of the way, and so got back with less labour than we had anticipated. When we revisit these Broads, it will not be by the medium of Muck Fleet.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE MERRIEST CRUISE OF ALL.

THE idea of several yachts cruising in company is not a new one; but no expedition of the kind has been so successful as the one of which the log is now to be given. The difficulties in the way of organising a cruise in which ladies are to take part are very great. Part of the programme was that everybody met and dined together in the evening on board a wherry fitted up as a commissariat barge; and this made it necessary that the company should be carefully selected, and all elements of discord eliminated. A small committee was formed, with very ample powers of rejection and control, and eventually fourteen boats joined the cruising fleet. The commodore provided a wherry, and a professional caterer was employed, who undertook to give us dinner and provide two waiters at a moderate charge for each meal. A pretty burgee was selected as a distinguishing flag, and the start was arranged for a day towards the end of July 1883. The place of rendezvous was at Acle

Bridge, on the river Bure, and the following yachts met there at the time appointed—viz, the *Una*, a 3-ton half-decked boat belonging to the commodore—a genial clergyman, whose energy in getting up the cruise justly entitled him to the honour of commanding it; the *Kittiwake*, a 12-ton yawl; the *Hilda*, a 6-ton yawl, remarkably well fitted and found; the *Ruby*, an 8-ton cutter; the *Swan*, belonging to the author; the *Gnat* and the *Swallow*, 4-ton cutters; the *Mosquito*, 3 tons; the *Nautilus*, 2 tons, and lugger-rigged; the *Comfort*, an 8-ton *Una*-rigged yacht; *Sunbeam*, steam-launch; and *Chance*, half-decked boat.

The day before the opening-day was very wild and stormy, with a north-west wind, rising at times to the force of a gale. The *Swan* had spent the previous night on Wroxham Broad, with her owner and a friend on board. The latter was a stranger to the Broads, and unused to the noises of the night which we have before alluded to. In the middle of the night he awoke the skipper, and so earnestly said that he had heard somebody getting on board, that the skipper half believed him and turned out to see; of course finding no one there, and hearing only the rattle of ropes vibrating in the strong breeze. In the morning there was no room for doubt that the sails must be reefed their closest; and the wind being dead aft, every bend in the river meant a jibe; and with a boom as long as the boat, and a habit on the part of the blasts to come down at the moment of

jibing, all our strength and skill had to be exerted to make a safe passage. At Salhouse we passed the *Gazelle*, a 4-ton boat, also belonging to the fleet, but which did not join us until the second day. Her delay at Salhouse was fortunate for another member of the expedition, who, having no practical knowledge of sailing, hired an open boat, got a handbook on sailing, and started alone before that hard blow. A jibe soon upset him, and he had to swim ashore. There was no one near to assist him, so off he started in search of aid. Meanwhile the *Gazelles*, rowing about in their jolly, saw the upturned boat, and were afraid that some one was beneath it,—but their anxiety was dispelled by the return of its occupant alone, wet and dispirited. They took him on board their own boat, gave him a change of clothing, and generally comforted him; so that after his boat was raised, he too joined the fleet on the second day. At Horning Ferry we passed the *Gnat*, whose crew were taking in reefs preparatory to a start. Up to this point the *Swan* had been flying along at a great speed, but in the more open reaches below Horning she literally seemed to *bound* before the squalls.

“Here comes another!” the mainsheet-man would cry; and the skipper would grasp his tiller more firmly, and somewhat anxiously watch the bending mast, the straining shrouds, and the bowsprit-end touching the water. At length by Thurne Mouth there came a squall so heavy and prolonged that the skipper hesitated to risk the next

jibe, and sent his friend forward to ease the main halliards and let the throat settle: but the weight of the squall caused the bows to be buried in foam, and the peak halliard was also loosened, but fouled, so that the sail could not lower. Rather than carry something away at the beginning of his cruise, the skipper put his helm hard down, and the Swan swung round, head to wind, in her own length. The mainsail was lowered, and the Swan ran the rest of the way—some three or four miles—under her jib only, sailing well even when the wind was abeam. She was soon moored to the bank at Acle in company with the rest of the fleet, and the rest of the day was spent in visiting and criticising each other's yachts.

In the morning a troop of visitors to the various boats came by train, and the ladies were loud in their admiration of the yachts, which, with sails set and flags flying, lay close together ready for the start. The destination of the fleet was Potter Heigham, and the wind being from the south-west, was fair, although light. There was naturally much curiosity as to the relative speed of the boats, and the crews were as ready and eager to start as in a race, and were keen with friendly rivalry. After the preparatory gun, all eyes were fixed on the Una, which lay ahead; and the moment she started, the rest of the boats started with remarkable unanimity. The Swan was fifth, but picked up one after another, and in a mile became the leading boat, with the Hilda next, and the Gnat third.

These three boats soon distanced the rest of the fleet, and kept the same relative distance from each other to the end. As the strength of the wind varied and one or another caught a puff, she would forge ahead or pick up the craft in front,—and smiles would creep over the faces of her crew, while those of her opponents lengthened. As we turned out of the Bure into the Thurne, the sight was extremely pretty: the procession of white sails, sun-illuminated, against a dark-cloud background, the polished hulls of the yachts, the gay dresses of the ladies, the shimmer of the wind-rippled river, and the vivid green of the banks, made a picture which will never be forgotten by those who had the good fortune to view it.

The sail was a short one, however; and as each yacht came up to the destination, she rounded to and took up her position alongside the bank, so that in a short time the whole fleet lay stem and stern in regular order by the rond. The Myth, a 10-ton cutter, was already there. Then the wherry which contained our dinners hove in sight, and soon took up the space allotted to her. After lunch, which each party had on board their own boats the jolly-boats and rowing-boats were manned, and the company rowed up the Hundred Stream and visited Somerton and Martham Broads. This part has already been described in the Cruise of the Coya, and a repetition of its charms would be tedious to the reader. Somerton is in these parts said to be the end of the world; but an island on the Broad, with a large tree-shaded boat-house

on it, in which some of us took shelter from a shower, looked so ancient and forgotten that it might have been called the beginning of the world.

The ladies, of course, gathered lilies and bulrushes, flowers and grasses, as they did every day of the cruise ; but there is now a regulation on the Swan that no such things shall be brought on board, because they make a litter which has to be cleaned up afterwards ; and notwithstanding pleading words and reproachful looks from bright eyes, the skipper stuck to his colours in this respect.

When rowing back we found that the great raft which is laid across the river at Martham Staithe when required for ferrying, as described in a previous chapter, was fixed across, and that a wherry lay alongside of it discharging a cargo of marl into carts. In order to permit of our passing, raft, wherry, carts, and planks had to be moved, and work was stopped for half an hour while the scattered boats filed past ; but the interruption was borne with civility. Opposite Kendal Dyke is an eel-set, and the great net was suspended from poles on the rond, and it and the fishermen's hut were being tarred by a group of men who seemed to have tarred themselves as much as the nets, and looked extraordinarily savage creatures.

At six o'clock the dinner-bell was sounded, and the company came along the narrow strip of dry rond in Indian file, while the natives gathered on the bridge and looked on in undisguised admiration. "That's the way to

enjoy themselves. I never see such a thing before, and never shall again," said the "oldest inhabitant." In the hold of the wherry a table had been set all the way down with benches on each side, and a "cold collation" was nicely set out. Thirty people sat down to dinner, which was as many as the wherry could accommodate, and several dined on board their own craft. The meal was very jolly and amusing, as the fit was so tight that one had to agree with one's neighbour for an alternate movement of hands to mouth. Both the waiters happened to be tall men, and the wherry was deficient in head-room at the sides where they had to pass, so for the first two days they thumped the beams with their heads incessantly, and it was ludicrous to witness them straighten themselves when they came to an open hatchway and give vent to sighs of relief. Then the slope of the sides of the wherry, particularly at the bow and stern, was trying to them, and every now and then they lost their balance and slid under the table with a crash.

Immediately after dinner the steam-launch was brought alongside, and those visitors who had to return were taken back to Acle to catch the train there. The run down was without incident, and Acle, which in the morning was so full of life and bustle, at evening looked deserted and forlorn. The run back was in the dark, and the author, who was steering, found it rather difficult to see his course, the quick motion not allowing the eye time to distinguish the forms of objects on the bank. It was noticed that the

reflection of objects in the water was visible long before the objects themselves, and several times the steersman thought he was approaching a boat, when it was only the image of some invisible bush on the bank showing in the middle of the river. On approaching an eel-net we slowed until the man lowered it, and passed gently over. At last the lights of the fleet were seen, and after standing for two hours and a half behind a hot little funnel, which emitted plenty of smoke and sparks, we were glad to join the party on the wherry and hear a little music (there was a piano on board) before turning in.

That night was the stillest night imaginable. Not a ripple washed against the hulls; not a zephyr made a rustle in the reeds or sighed in the cordage, and even those to whom the position was novel slept soundly. The morrow was beautifully fine, and some of the sailing-boats of light draught were taken through the bridges, and the steam-launch towed two jolly-boats and a canoe. In this way the expedition proceeded up the Hundred Stream, Kendal Dyke, Heigham Sounds, Horsey Dyke, and to Horsey Mere, and picnicked on the shores of the lake, afterwards walking to the coast. A bevy of school-children turned out to see the strangers, and to the first of us they made elaborate curtseys, bobbing up and down like so many floats on a perch-pond. The exercise, however, was too much for them, or the novelty of our appearance soon wore off, for to the last detachment of us they offered no recognition except a stolid stare.

The yellow sandhills were sharp and bright against the bluest of skies, and the sea was all in a glitter, with its wave-crests stripped by the wind. One wondered what existence must be like in the few and lonely farmhouses hiding under the shelter of the mael-banks, when the land was made more desolate still by the bleak winter. The level plain, with its gleams of water, looked bright in the sunshine; but when a cloud came over the sun and its shadow darkened the land, the contrast was extreme. Then space seemed waste, and the glowing colours faded to a monotone.

On our way back along the dyke we discovered the canoist seated on the bank with his canoe hauled up beside him. It had sprung a leak, and we had to take both man and boat on board. After taking a run over Hickling Broad, the party returned just in time to get ready for the six o'clock dinner. It is difficult to give any idea of how pleasant the evening gatherings on board the wherry were. Each person was animated with a desire to please and a determination to be pleased. The ladies sang and played, glees and part-songs sounded better over the waters than with more conventional surroundings; among the gentlemen were many who could sing a merry ditty or tell a good tale. One convulsed the company by his humorous illustrations of the Suffolk dialect; another could imitate the sound of sawing wood, the letting off of fireworks, the voices of animals, and so on. The presence of ladies and of several clergymen ensured the absence of anything

calculated to offend the severest taste, which is not always the case where youth, health, and high spirits are excited by any adventure. At eleven o'clock the commodore gave his orders for the following day—namely, that the yachts were to start at eleven o'clock, sail down the Thurne, turn up the Bure, stop for lunch at St Benedict's Abbey, and rendezvous on Wroxham Broad, where, on the next day but one, there was to be a regatta.

In the morning the wind was foul, and some of the slower boats slipped away before the allotted time, to make sure of their passage. It was tedious work beating down the narrow waters of the Thurne, and once the skipper had recourse to the quant. This slipped, and he would have fallen overboard but that the shore was within reach of an energetic jump—and after running along the bank for a few yards, another jump took him on board before some of the crew had discovered his absence. When the Bure was reached the wind freshened and the boats made better way, their tacking and cross-tacking being very pretty; and although bowsprits would overlap counters they would never touch, and the yachts worked in and out like an interminable ladies' chain. As all were sailed by amateurs, their performances during the whole week were very creditable. Each boat was well and smartly handled, and not a foul or mishap or bungle occurred to provoke comment.

After too long a delay at the abbey, the boats started again in a heavy squall, which laid lee plankways well awash, and the faster craft drew well away from the others

and reached the entrance to Wroxham an hour and a half before the commodore came up. We waited for him, in order to enter the Broad together, and make a show ; but a very heavy squall came up, and in a roar of wind and rain the fleet staggered anyhow on to the lake and dropped anchors, or ran into the reeds and lowered the drenched sails in a hurry. The wherry had run into a reed-margined inlet, and while at dinner we could hear the pleasant rustle of the reeds, and through the hatchways see them swaying above our heads.

The fleet had arranged to rendezvous on the eastern side of the Broad, so as to keep apart from the other yachts which had assembled for the coming regatta. It was, however, the leeward side, and there was a strong wind blowing, which made it difficult for anchors to hold in the soft mud, so nearly all the fleet lay against the reeds, and the crews had to endure the noise of their tossing and struggling in the blasts, as well as the loud dash of the wavelets. The Swan, however, lay well out, and paying out a lot of chain, rode through the night without dragging, notwithstanding she had her awning up and a large pleasure-boat tied astern. It was a noisy night, but the rattle of the rain, and the rhythmic splash of the water, only deepened the sense of comfort within ; while the feeling of absolute security, and a slight undulatory motion as of a cradle rocking, made sleep easy.

The regatta day opened with a fresh breeze, and sailing

about with a party of ladies on board demanded constant watchfulness, and by-and-by one of the ladies declined to sail any more. She could not see any pleasure in being on her back with the water foaming past her ears when her side of the yacht was down, or in standing upright and holding on when her side of the yacht was up, and she was certain that we must inevitably either be run down or run another boat down; so after lunch we took to a large pleasure-boat, and rowed first to the fair, which was in full swing at one end of the Broad, where we found our gravest parson shying balls at Aunt Sally, and our most earnest-minded young man laden with penny toys and eating gooseberries by the pint. We took them both from their perilous amusements, and rowed to the quieter nooks of the Salhouse Broads in search of lilies and bulrushes.

The orders for the day after were that the yachts should sail down to the mouth of the river Ant, and that the smaller craft should proceed up that river and visit Barton Broad. In the early morning there was a strong wind from the west; and as this was fair, and jibes would be frequent, the Swan started with two reefs in her main and the large jib unreefed, and went off at a great pace, when the wind shifted suddenly to the north, necessitating tacking in some of the reaches. As the Swan had a large rowing-boat as long as herself in tow, ready for the row up the Ant, she shook out a reef in her main and took one in in her jib, restoring the balance of her sails for going to

windward. While passing Horning Ferry there was a heavy jibe; the mainsheet-man had neglected to make the end of the mainsheet fast, and it ran out, the boom striking the shrouds with a jerk and bending like a bow. If a kink in the rope had not caught in the block on the boom, and so checked it, the latter must have been broken, and the consequences might have been serious. But a miss is as good as a mile, and the mainsheet-man promised to be more careful in future. The Ruby and the Swan were neck and neck, and jibed almost on to each other time after time, requiring the most careful management to prevent their booms striking each other.

Just below the mouth of the Ant the river Bure is very narrow, and with a beam wind it seemed impossible that the yachts could round to without running into the weather shore with great force. Yet one after another they came up at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour, helms were put hard down, the boats twisted round as if on a pivot, and the bowsprits slid gently over the grass. The only exception was the Hilda, which, being a long and heavy boat, shot up with such force as to cut a small dyke in the rond. Soon all the yachts were up in a long row at intervals of about ten yards, and their occupants fell to at lunch. A loud cry arose from the Swan's mainsheet-man, and we saw him with one foot on the bank and the other on a gradually receding boat. There was a rush to his rescue, and he was pulled ashore just as his legs had come to the extent of their stride, and

he had resigned himself to a ducking. A wherry and a lateener turning up the Ant, and the gay ranks of the cruising fleet, formed a pretty scene. The launch and the row-boats took most of the company up to Barton Broad ; and as they were a long time away, and the clouds were threatening, we thought it best to sail back to Horning Ferry before the storm broke. The wind had hardened considerably, but the skipper did not want the trouble of reefing, and he thought the Swan could stand it. His crew being away, he took the main-sheet and the tiller, gave the jib-sheet a turn round a cleat, and told his wife to hold on to the end, and not to ease it unless he gave a signal, and started. The water was over the lee plankways, and up to the edge of the coamings, and the angle of heel was alarming, but the good wife held on, watching coolly for the signal, which, however, it was only once necessary to give. The breadth of sail in the Swan from bowsprit-end to boom-end is 44 feet, nearly double the length of the boat herself, yet it is quite safe sailing such a boat in a breeze all alone, provided only one sheet is made fast at a time. Thus, with a leading wind you may make the jib fast, and take the main—after one turn round a cleat—in your hand. Then, if a puff comes, and there is not room to luff up, you can ease the main as much as you like, and keep your course with the jib. In turning to windward you make the main fast and leave it, working the jib. Then in a squall you ease the jib, and the boat flies up to the wind, and there is always room to luff up as

the length of the reach is before you. You must be careful to keep steerage-way on the boat, and not let her stop on each tack, or she cannot luff, and may get knocked down. One afternoon on Wroxham Broad we were sailing close-hauled, and the wind had fallen so light that those in charge of the main and jib had made them fast, while the yacht had nearly lost way. A round, black cloud was passing overhead, and one of us was just remarking that we might get a squall out of it, when down came the wind in the shape of a rodges-blast, broad on the beam. Down went the Swan too on her beam-ends, so that the cleats to which the sheets were fastened were under water, and could not be got at, and the water was pouring over the coamings of the well in a cataract. Of course the helm was put hard down: she slowly gathered way even in that position, luffed up and righted; but it was a near shave of being sunk, and we got a lot of water on board.

To return to our fleet: the other craft came up in due time, and the company gathered to their last dinner on board the wherry. After dinner we had a plenitude of music, and toasts were drunk with musical honours. Then came "God save the Queen," and the commodore with the last of the ladies drove away, followed by a ringing cheer. The men that were left—about a score in number—adjourned from the wherry, which was draughty from the attacks of a rising gale, to the Ferry Inn, and there the last songs were sung, the last humorous tales told, hands

clasped to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," and good-nights and good-byes spoke of the ending of the pleasantest cruise ever undertaken on these rivers.

The following day was Saturday, and the various boats made off to their destinations,—some running before the gale towards Yarmouth, and others manfully beating up to Wroxham. The wind was so strong that one wherry came by with her sail furled to the gaff, and the latter hoisted to act as a sail. Even running under bare poles like this, she went at a considerable speed, and jibed her gaff at intervals, just as if it were a set sail. There was a great deal of wind the whole of the week, and it culminated on this day in a really hard blow.

CHAPTER XL.

A RUN DOWN THE COAST.

IN discoursing of the rivers which run through the Broad district, one is rather apt to forget that East Anglia has other water-ways, which possess an interest of their own. Going southward, these are,—the river Blyth, which now reaches the sea at Walberswick, but which seems formerly to have taken a bend down the coast to Dunwich; the river Alde, which, after coming within a stone's-throw of the sea at Aldborough, runs southwards for ten or twelve miles along the coast, before it flows into the sea; the Deben, which has its mouth at Bawdsey Haven; and, largest of all, the Orwell, which from Ipswich to Harwich harbour forms a noble estuary. All these are in Suffolk, while Essex has a number of rivers, big and little. There is a curious similarity between the mouths of the Yare and the Alde, both being driven southward by the shingle-banks formed by the sea. In the case of the Blyth also, before that section of the coast was quite worn away by the strong southward flow, the same peculiarity was apparent.

An illustration of the strength of the flood-current which is wearing away the East Anglian coast, is shown by the difference in the rise and fall of the tide, which varies according to the opposition it receives from the projections of land. Thus, where the current meets the shores of the Wash and the coast of north Norfolk, it is heaped up, so that the tide rises 23 feet. At Yarmouth, where it sweeps by without direct opposition, the rise and fall is only 6 or 7 feet; while at Harwich, in consequence of the resistance of the Essex coast, it rises $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet.

The matter torn away from the land is deposited in lines of shoals and sandbanks parallel with the coast; and these, together with the paucity of accessible harbours of refuge, render the coast a very dangerous one for yachting. Small yachts bound to the southward, endeavour to cover the distance between Lowestoft and Harwich in a day, which with a good breeze is easily done. It does not answer to be caught in a south-east blow on this coast; and yachtsmen usually wait for a steady glass and a westerly wind before making the passage. When, however, one can take but a fortnight's holiday in the year, and that at a fixed time, one might waste the whole of it waiting for a fair wind. So thought the crew of the *Swan*, in July 1882—that stormiest of summer months—as the little craft slipped out of Lowestoft harbour, and started to beat down the coast against a strong southerly wind. The crew were—the skipper, his brother who took rank as mate, and a brave old sea-dog who was shipped as pilot

for the passage to Harwich. There was a nasty lump of a sea, and the boom buckled so much that we lay to and took in two reefs, so as to jog along more easily. Under easy sail the boat rode over the steep waves in a way which elicited warm expressions of admiration from the pilot, whose exclamations were rather amusing. "Yep, ye little toad! There, the darling! See how she took that, now! I'd go anywhere in her." He called her many curious and endearing names; but his favourite was "little *toad*." He meant it to be polite, but it did not sound so. Off Covehithe Ness the sea was very steep, and the bowsprit and half the jib often dived into green water. The outline of the coast was very bare, and there was nothing whatever to see until we came to Southwold—a pretty town, perched on a low cliff, where many telescopes were brought to bear upon us. Off the town a pilot-cutter lies at anchor; and if the weather is so bad that it is unsafe for her to ride there, the brave Southwold pilots just set their storm-sails and take her out to sea. Wind and sea were getting up, and, for our first day out, the buffeting and drenching were not too pleasant. It was our intention to put into Walberswick harbour; but when we saw the waves breaking over both piers, and all white water between, we did not like the look of it at all; and as turning back was out of the question, we were debating whether we should anchor in Southwold (of Sole) Bay or keep going through the night. But looking to windward, we saw a cloud of awful blackness rapidly covering the

sky, and it was apparent that a heavy storm was coming up. Then we saw the squall strike a schooner to windward of us, and away went her jib like a pocket-handkerchief. This decided us. We were then opposite the piers, and could see a black buoy which, we hoped, marked the channel. The helm was put up, and the centre-board cranked up, in case we should touch; and just as the storm broke on us, we drove with great velocity into the white water. There was a slight shock, a harsh grating noise, and the next wave carried us clear. We had touched the bar and been driven through the shingle, where, as we afterwards found, it was dry at low water. No damage occurred to us, except that the boom was sprung in two places, and we flew between those piers at a pace one would hardly deem a boat capable of. Once through, we dropped the anchor, lowered the sails, and got inside the cabin, out of the way of a terrific thunder-storm. When it had passed we emerged, and let the boat drop astern by what is called dredging with the anchor, until we could moor alongside a smack. Here we had a large audience of idlers all the rest of the day, who told us that the bar was right across the mouth, and that with a prevalence of southerly winds, the opening through it was to the northward, and with northerly winds the opening moved to the southward, and that it was rarely two days alike. After looking at the bar at low water, we made up our minds that never again would we try Walberswick or Southwold harbour in any kind of craft. The piers are tumbling to pieces, and

the great worn capstans which are used for hauling vessels *through the shingle* looked almost past use. Last winter the harbour became quite closed up, so that no vessel could go in or out. All around are speaking evidences of its decadence as a port—rotting barges, disused smacks, desolate wharves. The effect is heightened by the scores of rusty anchors which have been “swiped” up out of the deep and deposited on the shore. The occasions are only too frequent on which a ship, by stress of weather, parts from her anchor in the bay, or lets it slip to run for shelter north or south. Then the trawls of the shrimpers get caught in these anchors. The spot is marked, and men go in boats and raise them, receiving so much a hundredweight from the Admiralty for them. The process of raising the anchors is called “swiping.” These huge, rusty, and forgotten anchors have each a tale to tell of storm and of danger, and the sight of them elicited from our old sea-dog many yarns of the occasions on which he had, when master of a ship, lost his anchors and ran for life before the gale.

A modern peculiarity of Walberswick is the abundance of artists there. They are as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa, or as peas in a pod. The old ferryman is more ancient in appearance than any man we ever saw, and, if transplanted to London, ought to make a good living as an artist's model. It is marvellous how a man of such age and apparent feebleness can row a heavy ferry-boat across the swift current so many times a-day. His fate some day will be to drop his oars from weariness and drift

into the hungry sea. On the southern bank of the river a quaint cluster of old houses bears the name of Walberswick, and, from the appearance of the walls of some of the rooms which are let as lodgings, it would seem that Art is almost the only industry of the place. In idle hours the brethren of the brush have adorned the available spaces with designs of bulrushes and such things, to the pride and delight of the cottagers. In the little creeks which run into the river you will see rotting barges, which speak of a traffic long since dead. In all its aspects Walberswick is a decayed port, a victim of the land-eating sea. Its present church is simply a corner saved from the ruins of what must have been a spacious and handsome structure. The size of many of the churches on the Norfolk and Suffolk seaboard speaks of a prosperity and a population very different from the present state.

We strolled up to Southwold village, carrying what the mate irreverently called the stove-pipe, but the proper name of which was a telescope. The people of Southwold and Walberswick are eternally staring out to sea. Even the quavering old women in the tiny cottages rest a battered telescope on the crutch fixed on the door-post and peer out, surely in search only of a dim memory. On Southwold cliff there is always a row of men gazing seaward. Some of them may be pilots on the look-out, for Southwold pilots are famed. On the beach below are numbers of small boats, locally called punts, and used for shrimping in the bay which lies to the southward.

In Southwold (or Sole) Bay was fought a famous fight between the Dutch and English fleets.

The following day was still very stormy and squally, with heavy thunderstorms at intervals. The sight of a 20-tonner caught in a squall and compelled to run back to Lowestoft, decided us not to emerge from our safe retreat as yet, and we drove to Dunwich, or rather the remains of Dunwich. Here was once a large and important port, where the river Blyth used to discharge its waters. Now, a ruined priory and a ruined church on the cliff are all that remain of the once flourishing city; but the few inhabitants of the present village still, we believe, call it a borough and have a town-hall. We visited the ruins, looked out over the disturbed sea, noted the cannons which now served the peaceable purpose of gateposts, and had probably been dredged up from the sea by the shrimp-trawls, and drove back again, catching glimpses by the way of pretty reaches of the river Blyth through the trees. The glass was still falling, but we felt that we must proceed with our journey on the morrow; and at high tide and slack water—which was at five o'clock in the morning—we hoisted sail to a southerly breeze and stood out. In case of our not being able to clear the bar over which the tide sets, we had stationed men on the jetty ready with a line; but we had just sufficient steerage-way, and got outside in safety. The wind was very light, and dead against us, while the ebb-tide made strongly to the northward, so that we could scarcely stem it. We tacked to and fro

opposite Dunwich Church until we could swear to the shape of every ruined window in it, keeping as close in-shore as possible to cheat the tide. There was a nasty swell on, and each time we got beyond the shelter of Thorpe Ness there was a lump of a sea, although the wind was light. Presently the mate noticed that the glass had fallen considerably since we started, and the sky in the south-east was very thick and angry-looking. The wind gradually drew to the south-east, and after a tack in close to the town of Aldborough, where we saw the masts of ships in the river, which were but a hundred yards from the sea by land and ten miles by river, we stood out to sea to get an' offing. A troop of fishing-boats were hurrying back as fast as they could to escape the impending blow, and the wind and sea were rapidly increasing. The *bête noire* of yachtsmen on this coast is the promontory of Orford Ness, where the scour of tide is very strong, and with the wind against it, raises a steep and dangerous sea. On our return journey we had a full experience of this, but in going we stood well out and avoided the race of tide, and so thick and dirty was it that one could not see the famous Ness. As the wind hardened and the sea rose we reduced sail; but we went along at a rare pace, and with a south-easterly wind we could lay our course for the Cork light-ship without any further tack-ing. During a squall a loud crack beneath our feet startled us.

"That's the centre-board gone," exclaimed the pilot.

"I don't like a boat with a slit in the bottom. Like enough we shall sink now."

As it afterwards turned out, it was a bottle of stout which had exploded under the cabin-floor; but at the time we did not think of this, and when we presently found that the cabin was all awash with water, we feared that something had indeed gone. The pump was on the starboard side, which, being the lee side, was well under water; but the skipper lashed himself to the boat and tried to work the pump, but failed to do so in the smother of foam and water which swept over him. Then the mate discovered that the water came in by the side of the mast, and when this opening was plugged up no more water came in, and we were able to bale out, with, however, a considerable amount of unpleasant exertion. It was blowing half a gale with a steep sea running, and the bowsprit and half the jib were frequently under water, while the broken wave-crests rattled half-way up the mainsail. To add to our discomfort, the shock of a sea had knocked the compass-card off the gimbals, and when we had replaced it we fancied it was not true. In a fit of economy somewhat rare on his part, the skipper had purchased a cheap compass, and he regretted this small saving extremely when he found that the safety of his craft and crew depended upon a straight course being steered through the thick mist, rain, and spindrift. At last the long-looked-for Cork light-ship loomed ahead, and we could bear away for Landguard Point and the safety of Harwich harbour. We

could now catch glimpses of the shore, and hear the melancholy cadence of the bell-buoy which marks the passage in to Harwich harbour. We were very glad to reach smooth water, and running up between the lines of fishing-smacks, locally called "Bauley boats," we dropped our anchor as close to the shore as we thought we might venture.

"Now do you go and telegraph to your friends that you have got here safely," said the pilot, who had not much relished the passage; but it was not necessary to follow his advice. After getting the boat and ourselves in order, we went ashore; and after strolling about a few back slums in search of the principal street, we made inquiries, and found that the dirty little streets were all that Harwich could boast of. The harbour is formed of the estuary of two fine rivers,—the Orwell and the Stour,—and is protected by the projection of Landguard Point off the northern coast. The harbour is a very large one, and affords capital anchorage for large vessels; but for tiny crafts like ours it is too open, and if it blows hard down either of the rivers or in from sea, a nasty lop gets up which makes it unpleasant riding. You can neither sit, stand, nor lie down with any certainty during the continuance of the blow, and you have to get up your anchor and sail to a more protected portion of the harbour, or up one of the rivers, according to the direction of the wind.

That night we slept soundly for an hour or two, and then the skipper awoke, feeling that something was dread-

fully wrong, though he did not know what. Right overhead there seemed to be a window where no window ought to be, and he himself was not lying in his hammock, but on something very hard. After a moment's bewilderment, it flashed across him that the yacht was on her side,—a conclusion emphasised by the mate rolling out of his berth, which was on the upper side. Gaining the deck, he found that the tide had left the mud nearly bare. As this was the first time the Swan had been so treated, no sleep was possible until the tide rose, and it was clear that the yacht would rise also, which she did, before the water reached her deck. Add to this excitement the watching of the riding light, which would swing round the forestay and go out; the hourly arrival of smacks and barges, and the rattling of chain cables as they dropped their anchors all around us; the bumping of our dingey against us at intervals, and various other sounds, and this, and indeed each night we spent in Harwich harbour, was a wakeful one.

It was a relief to run up the Orwell—which, when the tide is in, has the appearance of a noble wood-fringed lake, or series of lakes—and anchor opposite the picturesque village of Pin Mill, about four miles up the river. On the only fine day we had during the cruise, we abandoned ourselves to laziness, strolled through the beautiful woods, took pictures of the quaint village habitations, and the red-sailed barges which anchored close by and lay on the mud at low water, and in the evening watched the river fill with the brimming tide, each ripple aflame with the

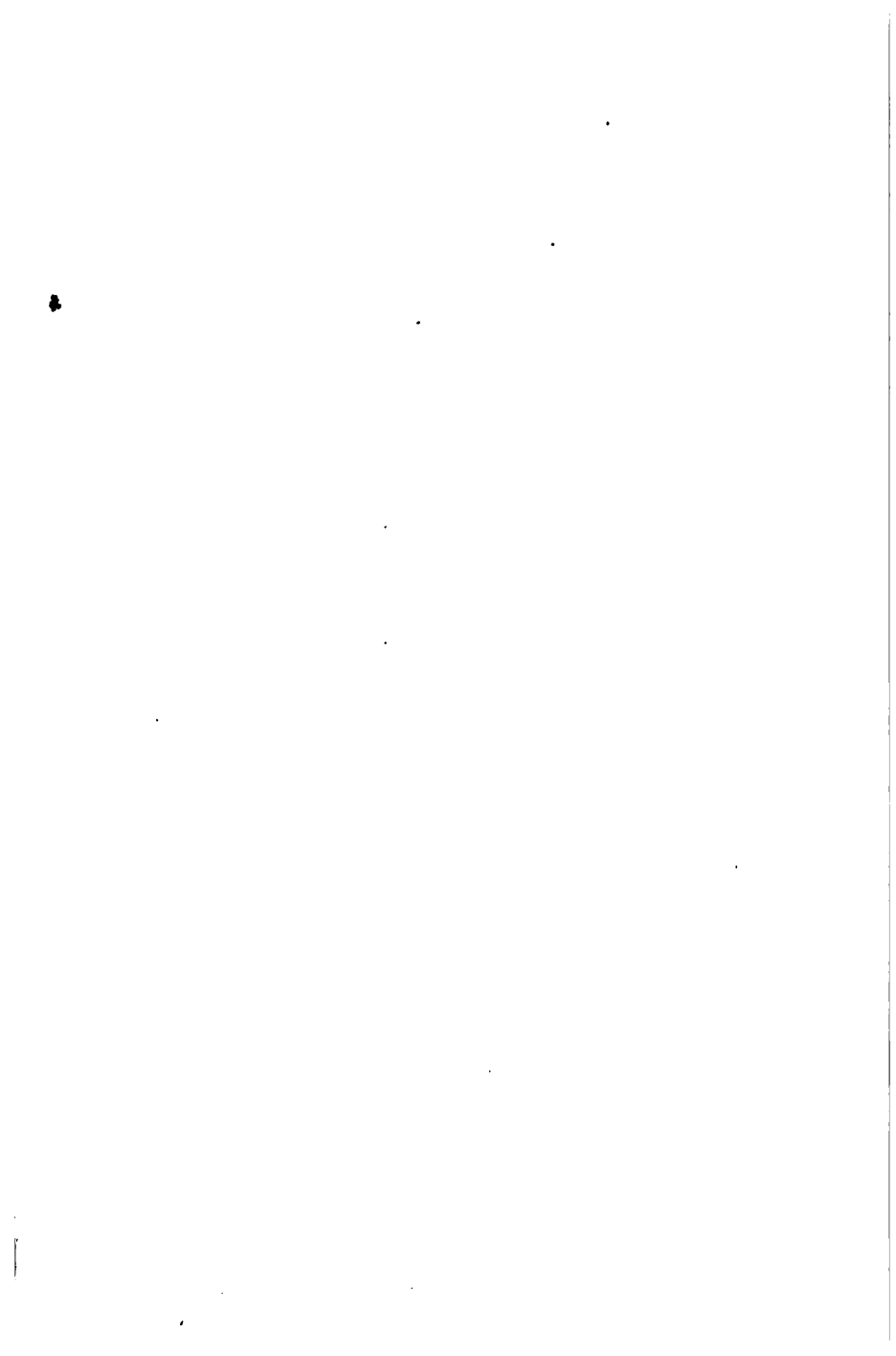
reflection of the sunset ; the big ships and steamers passing by, the darkening trees on the far margins,—and hoped that at last the weather would become finer. But no : day after day the rain fell and the wind blew ; we had all our clothes wet and could not dry them ; if we ventured outside with whole sails, we soon had to lie to and reef. Winter weather could not have been coarser, and we began to wish ourselves back on the Broads, where we could at least have quiet nights. So after a week of cruising, with Harwich as our headquarters, we determined to run back. The last night at anchor in the harbour was a dreadful one. The Swan was pitching bowsprit under, the wind howled fiercely, the dash of the waves was not at all inspiring ; we were riding to two anchors, with a lot of chain and warp out, and yet were so afraid of dragging, that one or other of us was constantly up to see if we had dragged, or if any other vessel were dragging on to us. Then both of us were positive that we heard a woman's shrieks and wailings borne down to us on the storm. This was no doubt fancy, but at the time it added greatly to our discomfort, and when we turned out in the morning, it was with a determination to leave Harwich at all costs, though we were not in the best condition, after such a disturbed night, for a somewhat adventurous sail. The wind had moderated, but it was still blowing very hard from the south-west. With close-reefed mainsail and spit-fire jib, we left Harwich at six o'clock in the morning. A 25-ton cutter started with us, also under storm canvas.

By the bell-buoy we encountered three heavy seas, the last of which swept clean over the deck and cabin-top, and carried away the sweep and the boathook. We turned back and recovered the former, and then resumed our course. The cutter got the sea into her mainsail, and carried away her peak halliards. She turned and ran back into the harbour under her jib, and the crew of the Swan were mightily tempted to follow her, but thought they would have one more try. Once round the buoy the wind was fair, and we bowled along at a great pace, keeping close inshore, and having no desire to try to enter either the Woodbridge river or Orford Haven, which, had the weather been finer, we wished to have done. The sea was so heavy that we fear to describe it, lest we should be accused of exaggeration. Suffice it to say, that if the Swan had not been an excellent sea boat she could not have made the passage. The height and steepness of the waves while rounding Orford Ness was very remarkable. It is fifty geographical miles from Harwich to Lowestoft, and we did it, *against the flood-tide*, in seven hours and a half. An hour of this was occupied in doing about one mile by the Ness, where we seemed at times to be stationary, held between the opposing forces of wind and tide. At half-past one we entered Lowestoft harbour, and at two o'clock reached our moorings upon the peaceful bosom of Oulton Broad. Here the first mishap of the cruise occurred, the skipper falling overboard.

It is a curious fact that the last few summers have been

very tempestuous, while during the winter months we have had long periods of settled weather, with light winds. In the beginning of this month (August 1883), we were cruising in the Solent in a 10-tonner, and there were hard winds every day, with a summer gale on the Wednesday of the Cowes week. During the same week a roddes-blast broke over the river near Norwich, upset several boats, tore sails to ribbons, blew haycocks over the river, and a pony and cart into it, and levelled a large marquee.

We do not desire such weather, seeing the enormous sails we carry on our Norfolk boats.



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